

2004

# Relationship Dynamics in Latino-White Intercultural Marriages: a Three Group Comparison

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RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS IN LATINO -WHITE  
INTERCULTURAL MARRIAGES: A THREE GROUP COMPARISON

BY

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Seton Hall University  
2004

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who, directly, or indirectly, helped me to complete this project. First of all, I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Sharon Davis Massey, who worked extremely long and hard to make this project the best possible piece of research that it could be, and who provided me with a great amount of support, encouragement, and advice throughout my difficult journey. I could not have made it without you in my corner! I would also like to mention a few words of appreciation for Dr. Adriana B. Dunn, my first dissertation mentor, who modeled for me the passion and dedication that research requires, and who offered guidance and helpful ideas from the beginning, which helped to shape my final dissertation proposal. Thanks are also in order to Dr. Robert Massey, who offered his expertise and support throughout this project and who has incessantly encouraged me to expand my personal and professional horizons. Finally, my appreciation goes to Dr. Wesley Matsui, who also lent his expertise and support to the project in his capacity of reader.

I would also like to thank my loving husband, Edward Muller, who has endured my long absences and emotional crises during my entire graduate training, and who has not only supported and encouraged me at every step of the way, but also made sacrifices of his own to help me succeed. He has been my constant partner and companion in the journey that is our own intercultural marriage, which provided the original inspiration that led me to pursue this project.

My parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and grandparents have offered me their love and encouragement, as well as their financial, practical, and moral support, both during graduate school and during the completion of this dissertation. They never stopped having faith in me, and I love and appreciate them immensely for that.

Thank you to all my wonderful friends and classmates, who have been patient and understanding, who have offered ideas, and who have constantly cheered me on to the finish line. I would like to especially recognize Travis Martin, Narda Molinarez, David Mitchell, Fran Gaal, Joseph Kabali, Dr. Judith Gonzalez, Dr. Jennifer Baker, Dr. Nicole Safonte-Strumolo, and Fred Katz III, for the support and friendship that they gave me.

A million thanks to all of my professors, supervisors, and mentors for molding me into the professional that I am today. You inspired me with your examples, fostered my love of psychology and of marriage and family therapy, nourished my talents, and encouraged my ambition. A special thanks to Dr. Angelo Spinazzola, who had a major impact on the way that I see therapy, Dr. Caroline Janoka-Garner, for teaching me to trust myself and value my own gifts, and Dr. Douglas Carpenter for his support and faith in me.

My deep appreciation also goes to everyone who kindly assisted me in any way during the completion of this project. This includes all the people who helped me during the arduous data-collection stage, the compilation and preparation of research materials, the statistical analyses and the writing of this dissertation.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the many courageous couples who participated in my study. Clearly, I would not been able to make it without them, and I appreciate their willingness to share their experience with me despite the significant investment of time and effort required.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Several authors have noted the dramatic increase in intercultural and interracial couples in the United States over the past few decades (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Crohn, 1998; Davidson, 1992; Durodoye, 1994; Gordon, 1964; Ho, 1990; Killian, 2001; Negy & Snyder, 2000; Ponce, 1977; Pope, 1986). This increase has been partly attributed to the June 1967 Loving vs. the State of Virginia decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court banned laws passed by certain states prohibiting interracial marriages (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Crohn, 1998; Davidson, 1992; Soncini, 1997; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1990).

Despite the increase in interracial and intercultural marriages, there has been a paucity of quantitative and qualitative research on these couples (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Davidson, 1992; Lampe, 1982; Liang & Ito, 1999; Negy & Snyder, 2000; Soncini, 1997). Most of the available literature is limited to clinically-based information, and much of it is already outdated. Furthermore, though there are many combinations of interracial and intercultural marriages, most of the literature pertains specifically to Black-White interracial marriages.

The few quantitative studies that are available on interracial/intercultural couples have been conducted primarily with convenience samples, which means that the samples have not been representative of these couples as a population (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Stuart, 1973). Chan and Wethington (1998) wrote about the difficulty in obtaining

representative samples with these couples since they tend to be concentrated in limited geographical areas, mostly large cities.

Census information from recent decades has served to document an increase in the number of Latinos living in the United States. In 1980, there were 14,609,000 Latinos living in the United States, in 1990 there were 22,379,000 and in 2000 there were 32,440,000. Census information also reveals an increase in the number of Latino/non-Latino marriages, with 891,000 recorded in 1980, 1,193,000 in 1990 and 1,742,000 in 2000. While Latino rates of intermarriage have dropped by about 5% since 1980, as of the year 2000 more than 25% of Latinos were marrying non-Latino partners. This percentage acquires even greater significance when one compares Latino rates of intermarriage to those of Whites (3 %) and African Americans (9%) as of the year 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Interestingly, the census report does not document how many of the Latino intermarriages are to White Americans, to African Americans, to Asian Americans, or to Americans of other ethnic backgrounds. The reason for this is that Latinos are acknowledged as persons representing all racial backgrounds, so, in order to avoid racial overlap, they are categorized separately from the traditional racial groups (e.g., White, Black, Asian) with the designation "persons of Latino origin" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Still, one can probably assume that a sizable portion of Latino intermarriages is occurring between Latinos and Whites, even if these types of matches do not represent a majority of Latino/non-Latino marriages. All in all, the census figures evidence a need to study the relationship dynamics of various types of Latino/non-Latino couples. Studying Latino-White marriages would help to enhance our understanding of Latino/non-Latino

intercultural relationship processes, as well as to create and implement appropriate clinical intervention strategies for these couples.

In addition, the role of acculturation in the marital satisfaction and adjustment of Latino-White intercultural couples has not yet been established. This variable might have a powerful impact on Latino-White marital relationships because of its already significant role and potential to create psychological stress in Latino-Americans as they struggle to adapt to the dominant culture and/or develop a bicultural identity (Dana, 1996; Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993). Also, very little is known about the overall communication and conflict-resolution processes in Latino-White couples. Thus, the goals of the current study were to add to the literature base available on intercultural couples, to assess whether Latino-White intercultural couples presented unique difficulties or challenges when compared to White-White and Latino-Latino couples, and to assess the role of acculturation in the marital functioning of Latino-White couples.

### Background of the Problem

Over the past few decades, marital functioning has received a great deal of attention in research and in theoretical literature, including in the areas of marital adjustment (Lussier, Sabourin, & Turgeon, 1997), marital satisfaction (Clements, Cordova, Markman & Laurenceau, 1997), communication (Christensen & Shenk, 1991), and conflict resolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Russell-Chapin, Chapin & Sattler, 2000). These variables have been explored almost exclusively with monoracial/monocultural White U.S. couples, and in only one study have they been explored in the context of Latino-White intercultural couples (Negy & Snyder, 2000).

### *Marital Satisfaction*

Traditionally, marital satisfaction has been viewed as a subjective assessment of the marital relationship made at a given point in time by the partners involved in it. Marital satisfaction has also been viewed as a part of marital adjustment, the latter of which is said to consist of both the couple's subjective evaluations of the relationship and the ongoing relationship processes that can be observed and measured (Sabatelli, 1988; Wilson, Larson, McCulloch, & Stone, 1997).

Many studies have linked marital satisfaction to marital processes such as communication (Burlington & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991), conflict resolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001), and adaptation/fit factors, such as background variables (e.g., socioeconomic background, family-of-origin dynamics) (Wilson, Larson, McCulloch, & Stone, 1997), individual variables (e.g., personality traits, physical and mental health) (Kelly & Conley, 1987), sociocultural/contextual factors (e.g., political climate, availability of suitable partners) (Larson & Holman, 1994), interactional processes (e.g., similar attitudes and values, time together) (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997; Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988), and family variables (e.g., financial management, household composition, parenting styles) (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Fowers, 1991; Wilson et al., 1997). The principal variables under study in this piece of research were communication, conflict resolution, marital satisfaction, and acculturation. Secondary variables were also examined and will be further discussed in the following chapter. These variables are personality issues, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, friends and family, role orientation, and spiritual orientation.

### *Communication*

Communication has been repeatedly linked to marital satisfaction.

Communication is likely to result in high marital satisfaction when partners are motivated to communicate effectively with one another and possess the appropriate communication skills (Burleston & Denton, 1997), as well as when partners are compatible with each other (Christensen & Pasch, 1991). Patterns of communication typically associated with low marital satisfaction include avoidance and withdraw/demand communication. Patterns of communication that are often linked to high marital satisfaction include task-oriented discussions and constructive engagement (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Comparing Latino-White to Latino-Latino and White-White couples regarding communication processes would help uncover similarities and differences in the manner in which these three groups of couples communicate. One might expect that on the basis of cultural differences—which one can view as a form of incompatibility—Latino-White couples might experience a greater challenge in communicating than the other two groups.

### *Conflict Resolution*

Like communication, conflict resolution has been repeatedly linked to marital satisfaction. Also, in reviewing the literature on communication and on conflict resolution, one can find a significant overlap. It is presumed here that communication patterns are closely tied to conflict resolution because it is in communicating, whether negatively or positively, whether verbally or non-verbally, that couples resolve or do not resolve their differences.

Low marital satisfaction has typically been associated with multiple areas of conflict in a marriage, including issues relating to money (Bowman, 1990; Storaasli & Markman, 1990), childrearing (Bowman, 1990; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001), and gender roles (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van DeVliert, 1997). It is also associated with partners' selectively attending to negative aspects of the partner or of the relationship (Epstein, Baucom, & Rankin, 1993); attributing relationship problems to global, stable, and trait-like characteristics of the partner (Epstein et al., 1993); holding negative expectations about their abilities to resolve relationship issues (Epstein et al., 1993; Sabourin, Laporte and Wright 1990); perceiving that one's spouse or the relationship does not meet one's standards (Epstein et al., 1993); partners' being unable to regulate their affective states during conflict (Christensen & Pasch, 1993; Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997); and partners' using destructive conflict-management strategies such as forcing change (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000), criticisms and put-downs (Gottman & Levenson, 1992), and violence (Rogge & Bradbury, 1999).

High marital satisfaction has been associated with partners' attributing relationship problems to temporary circumstances, partners' holding realistic expectations of the relationship and the spouse, partners' having faith that they can resolve any difficulties that they may encounter as a couple (Epstein et al., 1993), partners' abilities to regulate their displeasure and negative emotions during conflict (Clements et al., 1997), and partners' use of constructive conflict-management strategies such as mutual constructive engagement (Christensen & Shenk, 1991), mutual collaboration (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000), and humor (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

In relation to Latino-White marriages, the question arises as to whether marital satisfaction is affected by the use of positive and negative conflict-resolution strategies in the same manner as it occurs with other couples. A comparison between Latino-White, Latino-Latino, and White-White couples regarding conflict-resolution processes would begin to address this question.

### *Acculturation*

Acculturation is currently viewed as a bidimensional process whereby an individual has the potential to be bicultural, that is, to adopt elements of the dominant culture while retaining aspects of his/her original culture (Thompson, 1999). This is in contrast to earlier views whereby acculturation was seen as unidimensional, with the adoption of dominant-culture values and practices necessitating the replacement of culture-of-origin-values and practices. Sanchez and Fernandez (1993) proposed that adopting a bicultural identity leads to minority individuals' healthy psychological adjustment whereas ethnic divergence leads to stress. Thus, it is clear why acculturation would be an important variable to consider in research with Latino populations.

Regarding the impact of acculturation in marital relationships, theoretically, acculturation has been identified by a few authors as an important variable in the marital satisfaction and/or adjustment of intercultural couples (Contreras, Hendrick & Hendrick, 1996; Durodoye, 1994; McGoldrick & Garcia-Preto, 1984; Nagy & Snyder, 2000). However, little empirical research has been done in this area to reach any conclusions. One might expect that the degree to which a Latino partner in an intercultural union with a White partner is able to develop a bicultural identity (which would, in turn, allow him or



her to function competently in both cultural spheres) would help account for how well the couple communicate, resolve conflicts, and how satisfied they are with their marriage.

In a study comparing the interethnic marriages of Mexican-American and non-Latino White partners with those of Mexican-American monoethnic couples and non-Latino White monoethnic couples, Negy and Snyder (2000) showed that, for interethnic couples in which the wife was Mexican-American and the husband was White, the wives' levels of acculturation were positively correlated to their levels of satisfaction with gender roles and their satisfaction with their children, as well as to their husbands' dissatisfaction with children, husbands' rates of conflict over child rearing, and satisfaction with financial management strategies. In couples in which the husband was Mexican-American and the wife was White, acculturation did not relate significantly to any relationship dimensions (e.g., child rearing, gender roles). In addition, when comparing interethnic White-Mexican American couples with monoethnic White and monoethnic Mexican American couples, interethnic couples were found to experience greater satisfaction with the affective dimension of their relationship, as well as less overall distress.

It is important to note here that, while the findings of the above study were aimed specifically at Mexican American-White interethnic couples, currently there is limited or no research with other types of Latino-White couples. Further, Negy and Snyder (2000) examined relationship variables separately for husbands and wives. A question that remains open is how couples would respond to relationship processes as a dyad. Fowers and Olson (1993) noted the paucity of dyadic-level measurement in marital literature. Thus, one of the goals of the current study is to help obtain information regarding the functioning of Latino-White marriages by using the couple as the unit of investigation.

### Significance of the Current Study

The purpose of this study was, first, to expand on the current literature on intercultural couples by exploring a specific type of intercultural marriage which has received little attention: Latino-White marriages (most studies have examined White-Black couples, and the only study (Negy & Snyder, 2000) with Latino-White couples was focused on Latino partners of Mexican American descent). A second purpose was to compare the relationship dynamics of Latino-White marriages with those of Latino-Latino and White-White marriages in order to assess whether Latino-White couples experience more difficulties than Latino-Latino and White-White couples on marital dimensions such as communication and conflict resolution, as has been suggested in previous literature. A third purpose was to examine the relationship between the acculturation of Latino partners in Latino-White marriages and the couples' marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict-resolution processes.

One of the notable gaps in the literature with intercultural couples is that no study has yet been focused specifically on exploring the conflict-resolution or communication processes process of Latino-White intercultural couples, nor investigating how these might relate to marital satisfaction, or what relationship conflict resolution and communication may have to acculturation. The current study represented a significant addition to the existing literature by comparing the communication and conflict-resolution dimensions of intercultural Latino-White marriages with those of White-White and Latino-Latino couples, in terms of the couples' assessments of their abilities to communicate effectively, and their assessments of the existence and handling of conflict in the marital relationship, as well as their levels of satisfaction with the ways in which conflicts are handled in their marriage.

In addition, the current study provided a basis for examining the various relationship areas that are likely to be potential grounds for conflict for Latino-White couples (e.g., childrearing, gender roles, financial management), as well as evaluating how such conflict areas may compare to those that are prominent in Latino-Latino and White-White marriages. Finally, the role of acculturation was explored in relation to the marital satisfaction, communication processes, and conflict-resolution processes of Latino-White and Latino-Latino couples. Because communication and conflict resolution have been demonstrated to be critical in marital success, and based on previous literature with interracial/intercultural couples, difficulties in communication and conflict-resolution were expected to result in lower marital satisfaction for Latino-White couples, as compared to the two monocultural couple groups. It was believed that, because of varying degrees of acculturation, cultural differences between partners in a Latino-White intercultural marriage might, to a greater or lesser extent, interfere with communication and conflict resolution processes in the couple. Thus, Latino-White intercultural couples were expected to experience more difficulties in these areas to the extent that the gaps in acculturation levels were salient in the relationship.

This project was intended to address the following questions: Do Latino-White couples have more difficulty communicating and resolving conflicts than do Latino-Latino or White-White couples? Do Latino-White intercultural couples experience less marital satisfaction than Latino-Latino and White-White couples? Do Latino-White couples differ from Latino-Latino and White-White couples regarding areas of conflict? Do Latino-White couples with less-acculturated Latino partners have more difficulty in communicating and resolving conflicts than couples in which the Latino partner is more fully acculturated? Answers to these questions are likely to be valuable to marriage and

family therapists given the significant increase in the Latino population in the U.S. and the concomitant rise in Latino-White intermarriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). It was the researcher's hope that results generated from this study might contribute to the development and implementation of clinical interventions with intercultural couples, both for corrective and preventive purposes, and that results from this study might lead to the formulation of theories pertaining to the dynamics of Latino-White couples, as well as provide additional grounds for future research with several types of intercultural couples.

### Key Terms

#### *Intermarriage*

The term *intermarriage* refers to marriages in which the partners differ in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, and/or culture. There are a variety of terms used to refer to intermarried couples, and there is little clarification as to the different meanings of the terms. In most of the available literature, the term *interracial* couples is used, and it describes marriages in which each partner is from a different race. The emphasis has been almost exclusively on Black-White couples. Another significant body of literature is centered on *interfaith* couples, where two or more religions are represented in a marriage, with emphasis placed on matches between Jews and Catholics or Jews and Protestants. There are also a number of sources that refer to *interethnic* couples, where the partners have different ethnic backgrounds. Yet another set of sources uses the label *intercultural* couples, that is, couples in which partners may represent different races, ethnicities, national origins, socioeconomic groups, or religions. This latter label was the one employed throughout this manuscript.

### *Intercultural*

For this particular study the term *intercultural* (marriage) was chosen because it is the researcher's opinion that this term encompasses the racial and ethnic diversity which are, more often than not, simultaneously present in Latino-White couples. Differences in national origin and socioeconomic status were not the focus of this research project.

### *Latino*

The current study was focused on Latino-White marriages. In this context, *Latino* referred to any person born in a Spanish-speaking country in Latin America (i.e., from one of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, or Venezuela), or a person born in the United States whose parents were both born in a Latin American country and, if living in the U.S., immigrated to the U.S. after age 18. It is known that Latinos come from a variety of national origins and that they have a varied racial composition, including Native Indian, African and European ancestry (Garcia Preto, 1996). Thus, two partners may belong to different races, yet share a similar culture, the Latino culture. On the other hand, two partners may be of the same race, but have different cultural backgrounds. The focus here was on the cultural difference, though this may often be accompanied by a racial difference as well.

### *White*

For the purposes of this study, *White* was used to describe Caucasian non-Latino partners who were born in the United States and whose parents/caretakers were born in the

U.S. or immigrated to the U.S. before age 18 and who are of Western or Northern-European descent (i.e., from one of the following countries/regions: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, or Wales).

Persons of Spanish or Portuguese descent were included in neither the “Latino” nor the “White” category because these cultures share many similarities with both the Latino culture and the Anglo culture, thereby possibly creating a confound by blurring the distinctions between the two major cultural groups under examination. In addition, Spanish and Portuguese individuals, as well as Eastern European individuals, have a more recent history of immigration to the United States than do Western Europeans, which may move the level of acculturation of the “White” participants closer to that of the “Latino” participants, thereby creating a potential confound. On that basis, persons of Eastern European descent were also excluded from the sample.

### *Acculturation*

The term *acculturation* refers to the process whereby a member of one culture comes to gradually internalize another culture. More often than not this process occurs in cases of migration, when the immigrant adopts the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the host culture (Thompson, 1999). Models of acculturation have traditionally been unicultural or unidimensional. That is, they were based on the assumption that acculturation to a new culture was necessarily associated with disengagement from the culture of origin. Newer models, however, are based on a bidirectional or bidimensional perspective, and better encompass the complexity of the construct because they are founded on the premise that the individual has the potential to be bicultural, that is, to

adopt elements of the dominant culture while retaining aspects of his/her original culture (Thompson, 1999). For this particular study, the researcher adopted the bidimensional or bidirectional model of acculturation. This construct was measured using the Bidimensional Acculturational Scale for Hispanics (BAS) described on page 84.

### *Communication*

Bolte (1975) stated that "the vehicle for studying the (couple) relationship is likely to be *communication*, verbal and nonverbal" (p. 328). This statement illustrates the key role of communication in marital satisfaction and adjustment. Thus, in this study communication was a prominent variable under examination.

Burleston and Denton (1997) identified four basic communication skills:

(a) *interpersonal cognitive complexity* refers to a person's capacity to process social information, (b) *communication effectiveness* refers to the ability to produce messages that have the intended effect, (c) *perceptual accuracy* means comprehending correctly the intentions underlying the speaker's message, and (d) *predictive accuracy* involves correctly anticipating how one's message will affect the receiver of the message. These authors also clarified the important role of motivation in couples' exhibiting constructive communication. This means that a couple must not only possess the appropriate skills to communicate with each other, but also be well-motivated to do so. Otherwise, communication may be destructive, regardless of level of skill possessed by the partners.

Christensen and Shenk (1991) introduced compatibility as another important factor in couple communication. They theorized that the greater the incompatibility of the partners, the greater the communication skill required to reduce the incompatibility. They further conjectured that, while effective communication behaviors may reduce

incompatibility and reinforce communication skills, poor communication may exacerbate the incompatibility and diminish the existing communication skills, potentially leading to the deterioration of the relationship.

While communication is undoubtedly a complex process, exploring all of the aspects of marital communication exceeds the scope of this study. Thus, for the purposes of this research, communication was defined as a couple's attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the communication in their relationship, including their level of comfort with expressing their thoughts and feelings to the partner, their perceptions about the partner's way of communicating, and spouses' perceptions of how each communicates with the partner. In this study, communication was measured using the Communication subscale of the ENRICH relationship inventory described in Chapter III (p. 76). Only couple communication scores were reported and used in statistical analyses.

### *Conflict Resolution*

The literature on *conflict resolution* in couple relationships covers a variety of areas affecting conflict-resolution processes, including specific areas of conflict (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Storaasli & Markman, 1990), partners' cognitive assessments (Epstein, Baucom, & Rankin, 1993) and emotional states (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997), and the use of specific conflict-resolution strategies (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

For the purposes of this study, conflict resolution was defined as a couple's attitudes, feelings, and beliefs regarding the existence and handling of conflict in their relationship. In this study, conflict resolution was measured using the Conflict Resolution subscale of the ENRICH relationship inventory described in Chapter III. Only couple



conflict resolution scores were reported and used in statistical analyses. The terms conflict resolution and conflict management may be used interchangeably throughout this manuscript.

### Delimitations of the Current Study

The current research was limited to only one specific type of intercultural couple: Latino-White marriages. This evidences a further limitation in that in all three groups of couples there was likely to be a high degree of within-group variability; thus, it is possible that within-group differences may exceed between-group differences. Within the group of Latino-White intercultural marriages, several Latino cultures were represented, which posed a limitation given the degree of cultural variability that exists from one Latin American/Latino country to another (Garcia & Preto, 1996).

Another limitation was that the three couple groups were divided along ethnic/cultural lines, thereby possibly underestimating the degree to which racial, cross-national, socioeconomic, and religious differences may have played roles in couple relationships, particularly with Latino-Latino and White-White couples. Also, because acculturation levels were measured only for the Latino partners in all the couples, the impact of varied levels of acculturation in the White partners was neglected. This may have especially affected the scores of Latino-White couples, since one partner in these marriages was given the acculturation measure and the other one was not.

Further, because only English-speaking participants were included in the study, there may have been less variability with regard to the acculturation levels of Latino partners in both the intercultural Latino-White group and in the Latino-Latino group. This may have especially affect the Latino-White intercultural group, because differences in

acculturation were hypothesized to play a key role in Latino-White couples' relationship dynamics. The findings from this study may not generalize to other intercultural couples since Latino-White couples may present unique relationship dynamics not operating in other types of intercultural marriages.

Yet another limitation was that the participants volunteered for the study and were recruited on the basis of convenience, thus introducing self-selection bias, making the couple groups inequivalent on several key demographic variables, and rendering valid between-groups comparisons difficult to make. Further, since the data were based on self-report measures, this introduced the bias of the participants' perceptions of themselves and of their partners, which may or may not have been accurate.

In addition, while constructive and destructive conflict-resolution strategies have been discussed in terms of their impact on marital satisfaction and/or marital adjustment, specific strategies were not explored in this study. Rather, the couples were compared in terms of their own assessments of the existence and general handling of conflict, and their degree of satisfaction with how relationship conflicts are addressed.

Also, it must be mentioned that, because the study was cross-sectional and, because participant couples had different lengths of marriage, cohort effects may have been introduced (Hagenaars, 1990). In addition, the results did not reflect developmental changes in the marriages through the years. Finally, in this study only couple scores were reported and used in statistical analyses, except for acculturation, which was measured and analyzed individually for males and females. This means that gender differences in the perceptions of marital relationships were largely ignored. While using couple scores was useful in providing a dyadic perspective of the couple dynamics, it resulted in a loss of

information that may have been gained from presenting analyses utilizing individual data, and it may have oversimplified the results.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Theoretical Foundations

Over the past few decades marital functioning has received a great deal of attention in research and in theoretical literature. Specifically, attention has been given to marital adjustment (Lussier, Sabourin & Turgeon, 1997), marital satisfaction (Clements, Cordova, Markman & Laurenceau, 1997), communication (Christensen & Shenk, 1991) and conflict resolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2000). The following literature review integrates research findings as well as previous theories regarding some of the relationships among the above variables. Later in this chapter, the author discusses the applicability of that literature to Latino-White intercultural couples.

#### *Marital Adjustment*

Marital adjustment has been defined as "those processes that are presumed to be necessary to achieve a harmonious and functional marital relationship" (Sabatelli, 1988, p. 894), and "related to an ongoing negotiation, communication, and adaptation process" (Wilson, Larson, & McCulloch, 1997, p. 292). It has been distinguished from marital satisfaction by clarifying that satisfaction refers to the *subjective* assessment of the relationship made by each partner at one point in time, and that satisfaction is considered a component of marital adjustment.

In the current study, marital adjustment was conceptualized as an overarching construct that is inclusive of marital satisfaction, which is a couple's own judgment of their relationship. This assessment, in turn, is believed to be made by partners on the basis of communication, conflict resolution, and adaptation (or fit) processes (e.g., personality factors, compatibility, role similarities). Further, if marital satisfaction is seen as the "subjective" evaluation that a couple makes of their relationship, then one can assume that "objective" criteria also exist, whereby levels of marital adjustment can be assessed by examining important relationship dimensions (Sabatelli, 1988).

In this study, three main sets of processes were reviewed: (a) communication, (b) conflict resolution, and (c) adaptation/fit processes. It must be noted that most of the research available on couple processes has relied primarily upon couples' self-reports. However, in a few studies, the use of self-report has been combined with observational data, particularly in the areas of communication (Halford, Hahlweg, & Dunne, 1990) and conflict resolution (Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993).

The following literature review is organized according to the relationship processes discussed above. For each of the variables that play a role in adjustment (i.e., satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and adaptation/fit), a summary of available literature on couples is presented. In each section there is a discussion of how each variable is relevant to Latino-White intercultural couples and to the current study. Following the presentation on general couple functioning, there is a summary of the literature available on intercultural couples, including Latino-White couples where applicable, with respect to the same processes.

### *Marital Satisfaction*

Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997) noted that, while marital satisfaction has been an extensively researched idea, there has been little theoretical definition and description of marital satisfaction as a construct. As noted above, however, a few definitions have been proposed. Clements, Cordova, Markman, and Laurenceau (1997) defined it as "an attitude concerning the quality of a marital relationship.... a process that is susceptible to changes over time" (p. 336). This definition adds to those of Sabatelli (1988) and Wilson and colleagues (1997) in that satisfaction is described as a process subject to change rather than as a static construct.

Longitudinal examinations of marital satisfaction have yielded different findings. Some authors have conceptualized it as decreasing over time, beginning as soon as marriage occurs (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997). Others have conceptualized it as "U" shaped, with peaks occurring in the early stages of marriage and in the "empty-nest" years, with a sharp decrease in satisfaction occurring during the child-rearing years (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997; Mackey & O'Brien, 1998).

Since the late 1970s, marital satisfaction has been recognized as a multidimensional construct (Snyder, 1979). Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory was one of the first multidimensional assessments of satisfaction, including subscales such as affective communication, problem-solving communication, time together, and family history of distress. The Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication, and Happiness (ENRICH) (Olson, 2002) is another scale that measures similar dimensions.

Many studies have linked marital satisfaction to processes such as communication (Burlleston & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991), conflict resolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001), and adaptation/fit factors, such

as background variables (e.g., socioeconomic background, family-of-origin dynamics) (Wilson, Larson, McCulloch, & Stone, 1997), individual variables (e.g., personality traits, physical, and mental health) (Kelly & Conley, 1987), sociocultural/contextual factors (e.g., political climate, availability of suitable partners) (Larson & Holman, 1994), interactional processes (e.g., similar attitudes and values, time together) (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997; Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988), and family variables (e.g., financial management, household composition, parenting) (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Fowers, 1991; Wilson et. al., 1997). The relationship of each of these variables to marital satisfaction will be further discussed in subsequent sections of this review.

#### Communication Processes and Marital Satisfaction

Bolte (1975) stated that "the vehicle for studying the (couple) relationship is likely to be communication, verbal and nonverbal" (p. 328). This statement illustrates the centrality of communication in marital adjustment. Bolte further noted: "... in human communications, it is virtually impossible for the receiver to distinguish the intentional from the unintentional component of a message based on the verbalized content only. The receiver must rely heavily on the previous situation, context, tone of voice, gestures, and physical appearance" (p. 328). This statement illustrates the complexity of the communication process. It must be noted that much of the literature on marital communication seems to be connected to conflict-management research. Presumably, this is because the conflict-resolution process necessarily requires communication between partners, both verbal (e.g., mutual constructive engagement, criticism) and nonverbal (e.g., listening, avoidance, withdrawal).

Carter and Thomas (1975) created a list of twenty-seven (27) categories of verbal problems in couple communication based on a qualitative, observational study. This list included categories such as overtalk, undertalk, affective talk (e.g., crying, strong intonation), abusive talk, over-responsiveness, under-responsiveness, presumptive attribution, poor referent specification (failure to speak about an issue/event in concrete, specific terms), temporal remoteness (focusing on events of the distant past or future), topic avoidance, counter-complaining, and over-generalization.

Several researchers and authors have supported the role of communication in marital satisfaction (Burleston & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991). For example, Christensen and Shenk discovered that couple communication patterns predicted marital satisfaction four years after marriage. Specifically, non-distressed couples used significantly more mutual constructive communication than divorcing and distressed couples. Distressed and divorcing couples employed mutual avoidance of problem discussions and more withdraw/demand communication during problem-solving than non-distressed couples. For their part, Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997) observed that the quality of communication tends to remain stable throughout the length of the marriage, unless intervention takes place.

Most of the work tying communication skills to relationship satisfaction is based on the assumption that, whenever a couple utilizes unproductive or destructive methods of communication, this represents a lack of appropriate communication skills on their part. Thus, many behavioral interventions with couples in distress include a component whereby couples are offered communication-skills training (Markman et al., 1993). However, other researchers suggest that the relationship between communication and satisfaction may not be as simple as originally anticipated (Burleston & Deston, 1997).



Burleston and Denton (1997) conducted a detailed exploration of the relationship between communication skills and marital satisfaction. They noted that, contrary to the assumption of previous researchers, poor communication behaviors in a couple does not necessarily reflect a lack of communication skills on the part of the partners.

Furthermore, partners may or may not be motivated to communicate to the best of their abilities.

Burleston and Denton (1997) identified four basic communication skills:

*interpersonal cognitive complexity* denotes a person's capacity to process social information, *communication effectiveness* refers to the ability to produce messages that have the intended effect, *perceptual accuracy* means comprehending correctly the intentions underlying the speaker's message, and *predictive accuracy* involves correctly anticipating how one's message will affect the receiver of the message. Distressed and non-distressed couples were compared on each of these skills, as assessed by self-report and through use of the *communication box* developed by Gottman and colleagues.

The researchers discovered that distressed and non-distressed couples possessed the same level of communication skills, but that partners in distressed couples expressed more negative intentions toward one another. Burleston and Denton (1997) concluded that the negative communication patterns observed in distressed couples were the result of "ill will" rather than of a lack of communication skills. Further, all four of the communication skills were positively related to marital satisfaction for non-distressed couples, but they were negatively correlated with satisfaction for distressed couples.

Thus, it appears that communication behaviors exhibited by couples are partly a function of the partners' motivations to communicate and partly a function of their possessing the requisite skills. In the case of intercultural couples, one must wonder how

the above-described communication skills might vary as a function of culture. It would seem that, the greater the cultural differences between two partners, the more difficult it may be for them to successfully communicate with one another, since partners must not only be aware of the content of their discussions, but must also be attuned to the culturally-based idiosyncrasies embedded in a partner's communications.

### *Compatibility and Communication*

In the same 1991 study by Christensen and Sherk described earlier, the authors theorized, in their discussion of the results, that the greater the incompatibility of the partners, the greater the communication skill required to reduce the incompatibility. They further conjectured that, while effective communication behaviors may reduce incompatibility and reinforce communication skills, poor communication may exacerbate the incompatibility and lead to the deteriorate the existing communication skills, and, thus, the relationship.

Therefore, if one conceives of cultural differences as forms of incompatibility, this model might provide a useful way to examine the communication dynamics of Latino-White intercultural couples. If one assumes this model to be accurate, Latino-White couples would be expected to show greater levels of distress, lower levels of marital satisfaction, and lower levels of satisfaction with their communication processes than Latino-Latino or White-White couples, even assuming equal levels of communication skill and motivation.

### Conflict Resolution Processes and Marital Satisfaction

There have been several foci pertaining to conflict resolution in couples. These encompass areas of conflict, cognitive variables involved in conflict and its management, affective regulation during conflict management, phases of conflict interaction, and conflict resolution behaviors and styles.

#### *Areas of Conflict*

Research has supported the existence of a variety of conflict areas for couples. These include childrearing (Bowman, 1990; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001); sexual relations (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Storaasli & Markman, 1990); family and/or friends (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Storaasli & Markman, 1990); incompatible personalities (Bradbury & Karney, 1993; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Kelly & Conley, 1987); different beliefs, values, or preferences (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Christensen & Pasch, 1993; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997); independence from each other/time together (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, Sattler, 2001); money (Bowman, 1990; Storaasli & Markman, 1990); communication (Bowman, 1990; Storaasli & Markman, 1990); and division of labor/ gender roles (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van DeVliert, 1997).

Christensen and Pasch (1993) postulated that the most important and most common differences among marital partners have to do with conflicts of interest around central areas of the relationship, such as closeness (e.g., time together, disclosure) and power (e.g., decision-making, division of labor). Similarly, Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin (1993) discussed three important conflict dimensions: (a) boundaries, (b) balance of

power/decision making, and (c) the investment each spouse places into the relationship (both instrumental and expressive investment).

Storaasli and Markman (1990) examined the causes of couple conflicts at three relationship stages: the pre-marriage stage, the early-marriage stage, and the early-parenting stage. Money remained the most frequently and intensely debated issue among couples across all three stages (ranked number one). Regarding other main conflict areas, based on couples' rankings the early-marriage stage was characterized by conflict over communication, sex, relatives (family of origin), and friends, in that order. For couples in the early-parenting stage, following money, sex became the most prominent issue. Communication ranked third and was followed by relatives and recreation time.

For their part, Argyle and Furnham (1983) simultaneously looked at sources of satisfaction and sources of conflict in spousal relationships. They found that spouses reported the greatest satisfaction from owning property together, getting financial support from their spouses, and, to a lesser degree, from having their spouses respect their privacy. The two major sources of conflict were emotional conflict and criticism.

Several authors have proposed that the specific areas of conflict are not necessarily the critical factors influencing marital satisfaction. Rather, they have suggested that satisfaction or distress can result from the manner in which couples handle conflict (Clements, Cordova, Markman & Laurenceau, 1997; Markman and Halweg, 1993). Therefore, the following sections will be dedicated to variables germane to the *process* of conflict resolution.

### *Cognitive Variables*

*Selective attention.* According to Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin (1993), selective attention refers to partners' perceptions of marital interactions. They cited research evidence pointing to distressed spouses' lower perceptual agreement and lower accuracy of prediction of their spouses' definitions of relationship concepts such as commitment. They further stated that, according to previous research, couples who engage in "negative tracking" (noticing partner's negative behaviors while overlooking positive ones) may become more distressed and reciprocate negative actions from the partner.

*Attributions.* Smith, Snyder, Trull, and Monsma (1988), concluded that "attributions may underlie the patterns of behavior exchange that differentiate distressed and non-distressed couples" (p.3-4). Other authors have supported this viewpoint. For example, Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin (1993), defining attributions as basic beliefs about characteristics of an intimate relationship, proposed that certain kinds of attributions are particularly damaging to a relationship by eliciting blaming attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, *causal attributions* (who caused the problem, how global and stable the causes are), which are characterized by a view of partner traits as the source of relationship problems, are likely to lead to more negative responses during conflict. Similarly, *responsibility attributions* are likely to lead to negative conflict management behavior because they refer to a belief that the partner is sufficiently capable to be accountable for his/her behavior. Distress is highest when relationship problems are attributed to global, stable characteristics of the partner, and to characteristics such as negative intent. In addition, conflicts may arise once partners become aware of the *differences* in their attributions for relationship events.

*Expectancies.* Epstein and colleagues (1993) also explored the role of expectancies (future predictions) in marital conflict. In their literature review, they highlighted evidence that low expectancies of efficacious problem-solving may lead partners to engage in fewer problem-solving behaviors and more learned-helplessness responses. Couples who believe that they can change their relationship are more likely to report constructive problem-solving communication and higher marital satisfaction. In addition, higher expectancies of problem-solving behavior are correlated with a high quality of problem-solving appraisals, fewer instances of giving up, and more positive behaviors during problem-solving interactions. (Christensen & Pasch, 1993; Epstein et al., 1993). Similarly, Sabourin, Laporte, and Wright (1990) reported that distressed couples dealing with conflict compared themselves less positively with other couples than did non-distressed couples, and they also used less negotiation and more resignation as coping strategies than non-distressed couples.

*Assumptions and standards.* Assumptions refer to the basic beliefs that each person holds about the characteristics of intimate relationships while standards refer to the person's ideas about what an intimate relationship "should" be like or characteristics it "should" have. According to Epstein and his colleagues (1993), research evidence has led to the finding that marital conflict may be exacerbated by spouses' perceptions that their partners do not meet such assumptions and standards (whether the partner is aware of this deficiency or not).

Thus, it appears that whether or not conflict negatively affects relationship satisfaction is greatly influenced by the manner in which the partners process the conflict cognitively. Still, there has been relatively little research in this area, and further

exploration of the specific role of each of the above cognitive variables in marital conflict and satisfaction is warranted, as is the applicability of such a model with intercultural couples.

One might hypothesize that the cognitive factors above may be heavily influenced by cultural prescriptions. If this is the case, one might expect that partners from different cultural backgrounds, such as when one is Latino and the other is non-Latino White, could experience a greater amount of conflict based on these discrepancies than partners from similar cultural backgrounds, such as when both partners are Latino or both are non-Latino White.

#### *Affective Regulation*

The link between poor affective regulation during conflict and marital distress and decline in marital satisfaction has been repeatedly discussed and demonstrated. For example, Markman and Hahlweg (1993), postulating that early marriage is characterized by the two major tasks of (a) handling conflict and (b) maintaining and promoting intimacy, studied the role of problem-solving interactions in marital satisfaction both before and after marriage. They demonstrated that marital distress and divorce could be predicted from premarital interactions around conflict. Divorce was best predicted by negative affect escalation and male withdrawal from conflict. Thus, they concluded that affect regulation during conflict was a key factor in the development of marital problems and distress. In another article, Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, and Clements (1993) advanced their theory that partners' regulation of negative emotions during conflict is one of the most important aspects of marital success.

In the same vein, Sabourin, Laporte, and Wright (1990), Gottman and Levenson (1992), and Christensen and Pasch (1993) reported that distressed couples have more difficulty regulating affect and are more reactive than non-distressed couples. Clements, Cordova, Markman, and Laurenceau (1997), in their literature review, indicated that partners who cannot successfully regulate anger and displeasure toward their partners are at risk for marital distress and erosion of the positive factors in the relationship. They further stated their finding that it was not the existence of marital conflict per se that predicted the future of the relationship. Rather, what was important was how the couples approached these conflicts.

Gottman and Levenson (1999) studied a phase of conflict resolution that had received little attention, the rebound (or recovery) stage. They stated that conflict conversations induce significantly more negative affect and less positive affect than positive conversations. Further, most couples were able to rebound from the negative affect inherent in the conflict interactions. The researchers were able to predict marital stability (staying together) versus divorce at four-year follow up based on couple interactions during both the conflict conversation and the positive conversation. In the conflict discussion, couples who stayed married, as compared to couples who divorced, were characterized by husbands who were more interested and less contemptuous or disgusted, as well as wives who exhibited less sadness and more interest. In the positive rebound conversation, couples who stayed together were characterized by less husband anger and contempt/disgust as well as less wife anger and less wife affection than the couples who divorced. Gottman and Levenson (1999) hypothesized that the reason for wives' affection being higher in divorcing couples may be that wives may express affection



in response to their husbands' contempt/disgust, and thus may actually promote an unhealthy relationship dynamic associated with marital breakup.

It thus appears that affective regulation during conflict serves as an influential variable in marital satisfaction. Couples who are distressed are characterized by a diminished ability to control negative affect along with decreased ability to rebound from conflict. It is less clear, however, whether couples become distressed because they cannot regulate their affective responses or whether they cannot regulate affective responses because they are distressed. In addition, it is not yet known what role cultural differences among partners may play in each spouse's ability to manage such affective responses or in intercultural couples' marital satisfaction. Although affective regulation was not a focus in this study, it is certainly a variable that deserves attention in future studies with Latino-White couples and other intercultural marriages.

#### *Phases of Conflict Interaction*

Christensen and Pasch (1993) postulated the existence of seven phases in the sequence of marital conflict.

*Conflict of interest.* Discrepancies may arise between partners based on incompatible goals, wishes, needs, and desires.

*Stressful circumstances.* Major stress and daily stress affect the couple relationship based on how partners handle their stress. High stress levels may lead a partner to focus on his/her own needs and to a lowering of motivation for problem-solving, as well as a decrease in ability to accurately perceive the partner's intentions, recognize the partner's

point of view, or respond to the partner's needs. Stress may also exacerbate old conflicts. This further supports the importance of cognitive variables in conflict management processes (Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin, 1993).

*Precipitating event.* An event may trigger a conflict interaction. According to Christensen and Pasch (1993), the most frequent precipitants of conflict are criticism, rebuff, illegitimate demands, and annoyance.

*Engage or avoid.* Partners must choose whether to engage in problem-solving discussion or avoid it.

*Interaction scenario.* This can be of three types: (a) In demand/withdraw, one partner tries to discuss the problem and pursues the other, often criticizing him/her, and demands change, while the other partner tries to avoid discussing the problem, defends him or herself, and withdraws from interaction; b) Mutual negative engagement consists of both partners attacking, blaming, and criticizing each other, as well as competing to dominate the discussion and to find fault in the partner. Partners may use coercion to obtain some change from the other. Mutual negative engagement characterizes distressed couples; and c) Mutual positive engagement comprises interactions in which partners negotiate compromises, express their thoughts and feelings, seek common ground, and express trust, approval, and empathy. This type of interaction is more common in non-distressed couples than in distressed couples.

*Immediate outcome.* The impact of the interaction scenario on each partner is a function of his/her cognitive interpretation of the events. Distressed spouses interpret their partners' behaviors in ways that maximize negative impact and minimize positive impact. Distressed spouses are also likely to see the cause of negative events as located within the partner, as being global and stable over time, selfishly motivated, intentional, and blameworthy. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Bradbury and Fincham (1990) and with Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin (1993).

*Return to normal.* The immediate effects of the conflict subside, though it may continue to have long-term effects. Christensen and Pasch (1993) noted the paucity of research in this area, which has led to a poor understanding of what processes and/or actions are required for couples to return back to normal. As noted in a previous section, Gottman and Levenson (1999) made a significant contribution in this respect.

The phases of conflict, that is, the actual *process* of conflict resolution from beginning to end, is not well understood yet. Furthermore, studying such dynamics begs the question of whether such a process is uniformly applicable to all types of conflict and to all kinds of couples, such as Latino-White intercultural couples. Because the phases of conflict involve everything from the causes of conflict to its aftermath, one might expect that partners from different cultures might approach the process differently, which may lead to increased distress in Latino-White marriages.

### *Conflict-Resolution Strategies*

Conflict-resolution strategies have been the most researched aspect of the conflict-management process. Multiple studies support the link between conflict- management

strategies and marital outcomes such as satisfaction and adjustment on the one hand, and distress, separation, and divorce on the other hand. For example, Gottman and Levenson (1992) showed that couples who had more negative interaction (e.g., more complaints, criticism, put-downs, negative relationship-issue problem talk, escalating negative affect) than positive interaction (e.g., neutral or positive problem description, task-oriented relationship information, humor/laughter) were less maritally satisfied and were more likely to separate and/or divorce.

Christensen and Shenk (1991) compared divorcing couples, clinic couples (distressed couples who self-referred for marital therapy), and non-distressed couples. They found that non-distressed couples used significantly more mutual constructive communication than divorcing and clinic couples. Clinic and divorcing couples employed mutual avoidance of problem discussions and more withdraw/demand communication during problem-solving than non-distressed couples. For their part, Russel-Chapin, Chapin, and Sattler (2001) reported that conflict-resolution styles did not affect overall relationship satisfaction; however, partners who employed an assertive/directing (responsible, persuasive, and striving for immediate resolution/closure) style of conflict resolution were at higher risk for distress. In the same vein, Bowman (1990) discovered that marital happiness was positively correlated with a "positive approach" to coping, that is, with the use of strategies like physical affection, humor, initiating a joint fun activity, or activating good memories.

Rancer, Baukus, and Amato (1986) uncovered that, when partners were dissimilar in their levels of argumentativeness (when one partner but not the other has a high characterological predisposition to defend his/her position on controversial issues while attacking the other's position) the couple reported higher levels of satisfaction than did

couples where both partners had high levels of argumentativeness. The researchers did not comment on the outcome when both partners have a low level of argumentativeness. For their part, in a four-year longitudinal study, Rogge and Bradbury (1999) explored the role of violence in marital separation and dissolution with newlywed couples. They noted that aggression early on in the relationship discriminated between couples who remained married and those who separated or divorced.

The link between dysfunctional problem-solving and marital distress has also been demonstrated cross-culturally (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000 ; Halford, Hahlweg & Dunne, 1990). For example, Greeff and Bruyne analyzed the relationship between conflict-management styles and marital satisfaction in a sample of South African couples. They showed that spousal collaboration (assertive and cooperative confrontation of disagreements) was the conflict-resolution style that yielded the highest level of marital satisfaction for both male and female partners. Couples in which one or both partners used a competitive style (assertive and uncooperative forcing behavior, win-lose arguing) generated the lowest marital satisfaction.

Thus, most of the research in this area points to a negative correlation between "dysfunctional" conflict-management styles and marital satisfaction. Despite this fact, the relationship among these variables has not been studied in the context of intercultural marriages, specifically with Latino-White marriages, nor have acculturation levels been taken into consideration in this regard. It is, therefore, important that such research be conducted with a variety of intercultural couples. Developing an understanding of conflict-resolution processes in Latino-White couples can help practitioners to develop therapeutic approaches/interventions to reduce conflict and enrich the marriage. Thus, the second set of variables under analysis in this study can be described as conflict resolution processes.

There is another group of variables that is involved in marital adjustment. In the present review, these variables shall be referred to as adaptation/fit variables. They are discussed in the following section.

#### *Adaptation/Fit Processes and Marital Adjustment and Satisfaction*

Adaptation/fit variables include all variables pertaining to the individual partners' backgrounds and unique characteristics, as well as sociocultural/contextual factors, family variables, and interactional factors that bring the couple together and help them to create a couple identity. These variables will each be discussed separately below.

*Background variables.* Background variables include factors such as family-of-origin, income, age at current marriage, gender, race, and ethnicity. These variables have not been conclusively demonstrated to have a role in marital adjustment (Wilson, Larson, McCulloch, & Stone (1997). However, there is partial support for some of the variables being involved in marital satisfaction (keeping in mind that satisfaction, in contrast to adjustment, refers to the subjective assessment of the relationship by the partners) and stability (i.e., whether the couple stay married or divorce).

For example, Larson and Holman (1994) noted in their literature review that husband's education, but not wife's education, could predict marital satisfaction and stability. Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997) stated that spouses with higher levels of education rated marital consensus as less important than did less-educated spouses. They also reported that higher levels of religiosity were correlated with higher ratings of couples' respect, intimacy, and consensus. Larson and Holman (1997) stated that some studies had uncovered a negative correlation between age at marriage and divorce.

However, Wilson and colleagues (1997) discovered that age at first marriage was positively correlated to men's marital adjustment. According to the same authors, race was a poor predictor of marital satisfaction and stability.

Gender has been cited in multiple studies as a factor in marital satisfaction, with males and females' marital satisfaction being predicted by different variables (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997; Fowers, 1991; Larson & Holman, 1994). Regarding family-of-origin, Kelly and Conley (1987) showed that wives who divorced earlier in life had more tense, less close, and more unstable families of origin while husbands who divorced were likely to have close family-of-origin relationships.

In summary, some background variables have been shown to have a link to marital satisfaction. Two background variables were addressed in this study--culture and religion. Culture was addressed by recruiting three groups of couples according to their cultural background (intercultural Latino-White, Latino-Latino, and White-White) and comparing them on multiple relationship variables. One such variable of comparison was religious orientation. The three culture-based couple groups were compared on their assessments regarding their attitudes, feelings and concerns about religious beliefs and practices in their marriages.

*Individual variables.* These include factors such as personality traits, attachment styles, physical and mental health, gender-role orientation, overall stress, values, beliefs, needs, and goals. Wilson and colleagues (1997) explored the link between physical health, emotional health, and overall stress, and dyadic adjustment. They found that while neither husbands' nor wives' physical health and levels of perceived stress were related to marital adjustment, wives' emotional health was significantly positively correlated with their level

of dyadic adjustment. In a similar vein, other researchers have documented a connection between depression and marital distress levels (Beach, Fincham, & Katz, 1998; Kung, 2000; Larson & Holman, 1994).

Personality traits have emerged as salient with respect to marital satisfaction. For example, according to Larson and Holman (1994), personality traits may predispose a partner to distort relationship events or to overreact to negative relationship events. For their part, Kelly and Conley (1987) performed a longitudinal study spanning over forty years (1930s to 1980) in which they examined the role of personality and social variables (attitudes, aspects of early social development, and sexual history) on marital satisfaction and stability (staying married versus separating or divorcing). Personality was measured by way of a self-report measure and personality ratings were provided by participants' acquaintances. Compatibility was conceptualized and measured as a composite of marital satisfaction scores and marital stability outcome (whether the couple was still married at follow-up or not).

The researchers reported that personality traits were the principal predictor of marital compatibility, accounting for over half of the predictive variance. Specifically, the three most important personality predictors were neuroticism in the husband, neuroticism in the wife, and impulse control in the husband. In addition, wives who were more conservative in their attitudes and who had less premarital sexual experience were more likely to remain married than to divorce early in life (1 to 20 years into the marriage). Husbands who were less extraverted, more agreeable, and less experienced sexually before marriage were more likely to remain married.

Also on individual variables, Lussier, Sabourin, and Turgeon (1997), in a study with French Canadian couples, examined the relationships among attachment patterns,



marital adjustment, and coping strategies. They showed that secure attachment was correlated with task-focused coping. Anxious/ambivalent attachment was related to the use of emotion-focused coping strategies such as wishful thinking, seeking social support, and blaming. Avoidant attachment was related to avoidance coping strategies such as denial and suppression of feelings. In addition, wives' anxious/ambivalent and secure attachment as well as task-oriented coping accounted for a significant portion of the variance in husbands' marital adjustment. Similarly, husbands' anxious/ambivalent attachment and emotion-focused coping significantly predicted wives' marital adjustment.

Also in terms of individual variables, the gender-role orientation of partners has been identified as a predictor of marital adjustment. Lamke (1989) examined the role of instrumentalness (concern with material and practical relationship issues) versus expressiveness (disclosure of feelings, nurturance) in rural couples' marital adjustment. She identified four gender-role categories (she labeled them "sex role" categories) used in previous literature, which combine various levels of instrumentalness and expressiveness: (a) androgenous (high instrumentalness, high expressiveness), (b) masculine (high instrumentalness, low expressiveness), (c) feminine (low instrumentalness, high expressiveness), and (d) undifferentiated (low instrumentalness, low expressiveness). Lamke noted that husbands' expressiveness was the only significant predictor of marital adjustment for both men and women.

As did Lamke (1989), Larson and Holman (1994) supported the importance of similarity of gender roles as well as noted that marital adjustment is higher when both partners express nurturance, caring, and affection (expressiveness). They further stated that partners' sharing similar values, beliefs, and attitudes contributes to marital satisfaction and stability.

In the present study, two individual variables were explored: gender-role orientation and personality issues. The three groups of couples (Latino-White, Latino-Latino and White-White) were compared using their scores in these two relationship dimensions. The gender role orientation variable pertained to the partners' beliefs, feelings, and attitudes about marital and family roles (occupational roles, household roles, sex roles, and parental roles). Personality issues encompassed each partner's perception of and satisfaction with the partner's behavior, specifically addressing traits like moodiness, jealousy, and behaviors like public displays of affection and smoking and drinking habits.

Since personality is shaped by the cultural context of each individual, one might expect partners in Latino-White marriages to report higher levels of dissatisfaction with their spouse's personality traits than partners in monocultural White and Latino marriages, particularly if they use causal attributions (view the partner's traits as the source of marital problems) during conflict-resolution interactions, as described by Epstein, Baucom and Rankin (1993). With regard to gender roles, these might prove a major area of disagreement for Latino-White couples given many Latino partners' acceptance of traditional gender roles, particularly among those who are less acculturated (Vasquez, 1994).

*Family variables.* These include a number of family and marriage problems (e.g., problems with children, problems with family communication, financial problems), and family life satisfaction sources (e.g., positive perceptions of family life, satisfaction with household composition and satisfaction with home environment). Wilson and colleagues (1997) hypothesized that each partner's level of family satisfaction would affect his or her

own level of marital adjustment. They discovered that the number of family problems as well as levels of marriage satisfaction were predictive of both husbands' and wives' dyadic adjustment.

Two family variables that were examined in the current study were financial management and children and marriage. Financial management entailed attitudes and concerns regarding financial matters. Children and marriage included each partner's attitudes and feelings regarding having children, including awareness of the impact of children on the relationship, the couple's satisfaction with their roles and responsibilities in parenthood, and shared goals and values for the children. This variable also covered partners' agreement on how many children they wanted. The three groups of couples were compared on these variables.

Because financial management and childrearing have been identified as potential sources of conflict for couples in general, they might be expected to be at least as salient for Latino-White couples, if not more so. The area of childrearing can be expected to be especially crucial to marital satisfaction in Latino-White couples because culturally-based differences in values and childrearing practices may add complexity and stress to an already stressful marital and family experience--parenting.

*Interactional processes.* Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997), using Lewis and Spanier's model, and operating under the assumption that interactional processes are central to the marital relationship, identified five dimensions of rewards from spousal interaction: (a) *Positive regard for spouse* has to do with perceived similarities, attractiveness, and ease of communication between partners. (b) *Emotional gratification* refers to expressions of love and affection, and emotional independence from the partner.

(c) *Communication effectiveness* involves the ability to use self-disclosure, empathy, and accurately read non-verbal communication. (d) *Role fit* includes role sharing and role complementarity. (e) *Amount of interaction* refers to shared activities and effective problem-solving. Feeney and colleagues tested the validity of these dimensions using three criteria: (a) whether couples used them when discussing their relationship, (b) their role in marital satisfaction, and (c) whether they could explain variations in marital quality (this includes evaluative and descriptive aspects of the marital relationship) across the life span.

The researchers realized that the five-factor solution from which they started did not adequately describe their data. They collected two samples of couples, and the end result was a five-factor model of marital quality that did not correspond to Lewis and Spanier's five dimensions of rewards. These five factors are briefly described.

1. *Communication* referred to partners' understanding of one another and being able to relate to the other's thoughts and feelings and to communicate successfully.
2. *Compatibility* had to do with partners being understanding toward each other, being a good companion, and fitting the other partner's ideal.
3. *Attraction* pertained to sexual pleasure and compatibility, as well as physical attraction and love.
4. *Respect* included items on respecting the partner as a unique person, the partner being considerate and helpful toward the spouse.
5. *Intimacy* encompassed aspects such as being emotionally involved in partner's life, being able to express feelings and attitudes to the partner, and sharing one's deepest feelings with the partner.

According to Larson and Holman (1994), interactional history is a large part of the realm of couple interactional processes. This includes factors such as acquaintance history, cohabitation, premarital sex, and premarital pregnancy. The authors cited previous research indicating that the quality of the marriage is positively correlated with the length of partners' acquaintance. Cohabitation, explained the authors, has been associated with marital dissatisfaction and instability, contrary to popular belief. Premarital sexual intercourse, they added, has been implicated in marital dissatisfaction and divorce in previous literature, but the authors uncovered some contradictory evidence in this regard. In terms of premarital pregnancy, Larson and Holman (1994) reported that premarital childbearing, rather than premarital conception, has been linked to higher risk of divorce.

Another variable that can be included under interactional processes/factors is time spent together. The salience of this factor has been highlighted in several studies. For example, Smith, Snyder, Trull, and Monsma (1988) discovered that the proportion of time spent in joint activities was positively correlated to marital satisfaction, while the proportion of individual activities to the exclusion of the partner was negatively correlated with satisfaction. The most consistent predictor of satisfaction was the proportion of partners' leisure time spent in shared activity with the spouse alone. This finding remained consistent across the family life cycle. In addition, joint activities were discovered to be particularly important for wives, and the researchers hypothesized this may have to do with women being more responsive to joint activity as promoting the quality of the relationship.

Time spent together, which in this study was labeled "leisure activities," is one part of the couple interactional processes addressed in this study. The three couple groups were compared on their preferences for spending leisure time, including personal versus social

activities, shared versus individual preferences, and partners' expectations as to how leisure time should be spent. Latino-White couples were expected to report lower levels of consensus and more dissatisfaction with the use of leisure time than Latino-Latino and White-White couples because of culturally-based differences. Specifically, Latinos are thought to have a collectivistic orientation, which may often involve the seeking out of joint activities or family activities, whereas Whites are thought to have an individualistic orientation, which may translate into a stronger preference for individual activities and interests (Triandis, 1994). Thus, a Latino-White couple may have difficulty integrating these preferences in deciding how to spend leisure time.

Another interactional variable that was examined is the sexual relationship of the couples. Specifically, the couples were compared on their feelings and concerns about their sexual and affectional relationships, including satisfaction with the expression of affection, level of comfort discussing sexual issues, and partners' attitudes toward sex, birth control, and fidelity. Because of culturally-based differences between Latinos and Whites regarding attitudes towards sexuality and sexual practices, Latino-White marriage partners were expected to report more discrepancy in their notions of the role of sex in the relationship, dissatisfaction with levels of affection in the relationship, and/or disagreement on birth-control decisions as compared to Latino-Latino and White-White couples.

*Sociocultural/contextual variables.* Larson and Holman (1994) categorized background variables, and they included sociocultural variables in this schema. By sociocultural variables they referred to factors such as occupation, educational level, and age at first marriage. Another variable, which they called "current contexts," included

factors such as family and friends' approval of the relationship, job/career circumstances, political circumstances, and pool of available partners. Sociocultural/contextual variables have been included in many studies of intercultural couples attempting to document rates of intermarriage in particular groups (Liang & Ito, 1999; Sung, 1990), to explain who intermarries (Qian, 1999), and/or to explore the reasons why people engage in intermarriage (Lampe, 1982; Ponce, 1977).

Family and friend relationships constitute two of the "current-context" variables described by Larson and Holman (1994) which were examined in this study. This was accomplished by comparing Latino-White, Latino-Latino and White-White couples regarding their concerns and feelings about their relationship with relatives, in-laws, and friends. In Latino-White marriages, a higher degree of distress might be expected because of either partner's family and/or friends not accepting the intercultural relationship (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Chan & Wethington, 1998).

Finally, the current author proposed that acculturation fits among sociocultural/contextual variables as one that may have important ramifications for the marital satisfaction and adjustment of Latino-White intercultural couples (Negy & Snyder, 1997, 2000). Acculturation is discussed in further detail later in this literature review.

### *Summary*

It is clear that marital satisfaction is a key relationship variable, that it is an intricate part of marital adjustment, and that it is a multidimensional construct with links to multiple relationship factors that can be generally categorized under the areas of communication, conflict resolution, and adaptation/fit processes.

All in all, the roles of specific variables in marital satisfaction and adjustment are not fully understood, especially when considering the *interaction* among these variables. Further, there is a notable paucity of research regarding such relationship dimensions as adjustment, satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and adaptation/fit variables with couples from various racial, ethnic, national, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds, for example. Though the literature review presented here represents an effort to integrate different aspects of the literature on marital satisfaction and adjustment, the present author is concerned only with a few of those variables. The review is offered as a way to help to clarify the relationship among many aspects of marital functioning and to lay the groundwork for understanding how Latino-White couples might function as compared to Latino-Latino and White-White couples. The variables explored in this study were primarily culture, marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict resolution. Latino-White, Latino-Latino, and White-White couples were also compared across groups on personality issues, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children, family and friends, egalitarian roles, and spiritual beliefs.

### The Phenomenon of Intermarriage

In the present study, the term “intermarriage” referred to a marriage in which the partners differ in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and/or religion. There are several main areas that have been studied with regard to intercultural couples. Some studies have been focused on the question of why intermarriages occur while others have been dedicated to the exploration of characteristics of people who intermarry. Yet other researchers and authors have written about the particular challenges or conflict areas faced by intermarried partners while still others have discussed the factors involved in marital adjustment in such



couples. Acculturation has been implicated in a small number of studies as a factor involved in marital adjustment (Negy & Snyder, 1997, 2000).

### *Why Intermarriages Occur*

There has been some speculation about the reasons why intermarriages occur. The motivations of the partners have been explored, with the literature focusing on the themes of self-loathing/inadequacy (Gordon, 1964; Char, as cited in Tseng et al., 1977; Pope, 1986; Davidson, 1992; Durodoye, 1994; Soncini, 1997); resentment, rejection of, and/or rebellion against parents (Char in Tseng et. al., 1997; Davidson, 1992; Gordon, 1964; McGoldrick & Garcia-Preto, 1984; Soncini, 1997; Sung, 1990); sexual curiosity (Davidson, 1992; Murstein, 1973; Rose, 1973); hopes of attaining higher social status (Davidson, 1992; Liang & Ito, 1999; Murstein, 1973; Pope, 1986); sadomasochistic reasons (Char, 1977; Soncini, 1997); in the case of Black men dating or marrying White women, revenge against White men for demeaning and depriving them (Char, 1977; Pope, 1986; Rose, 1973); and confused racial identity (Crohn, 1998; Pope, 1986).

More recent sources, however, have noted the need to dispel the myth that intermarriage is necessarily ridden with pathology and plagued by constant conflict. Some have even conceded that interracial marriages may be based on love (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Char, 1977; Durodoye, 1994; Lampe, 1982) and personal liking (Lampe, 1982). There have also been explanations of intermarriage based on sociological factors, such as availability of partners of the same ethnic group (Char, 1977; Qian, 1999; Yamamoto, 1973), increased contact between members of different racial/ethnic groups (Ponce, 1977), and loosening of constraints based on social norms (Black, 1973; Lampe, 1982; McNeilly, 1973; Ponce, 1977).

While various authors have discussed partners' motives and other elements contributing to intercultural marriage, others have noted factors restricting these kinds of marriages. For example, Gaines and Ickes (1997) pointed out that interracial marriages are actually quite infrequent statistically, especially when compared with interreligious and other interethnic marriages. They also noted that interracial marriages, while considered interethnic, are different from other interethnic unions, first in their rate of frequency, and, second, in that interracial marriages, like many interreligious marriages in the U.S., involve at least one stigmatized partner. According to the authors, the greater stigmatization of interracial relationships as compared to interreligious relationships has to do with three main factors: (a) xenophobia, which is the "natural" tendency of people to be suspicious of those who look different from them; (b) negative social stereotyping; and (c) the fact that interracial differences are based on genetic factors, whereas this is not necessarily the case in interreligious unions. Yet another factor that may restrict the number of interracial/intercultural marriages, and which was not discussed by Gaines and Ickes, is that these unions were illegal until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Loving vs. the State of Virginia* in 1967, banning state laws which prohibited interracial marriages (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Crohn, 1998; Davidson, 1992; Soncini, 1967; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1990).

#### *People who Intermarry*

Another group of authors have focused on the question of who intermarries. This group includes researchers studying the rates of outmarriage for various groups as well as the characteristics of people who engage in such intercultural relationships. For example, using census data from 1980, Sung (1990) explored the frequency of intermarriage

between Chinese-Americans and members of other ethnic groups across the United States. She reported that most Chinese-American outmarriages occur in Hawaii. The researcher also explored factors affecting Chinese- non-Chinese intermarriage in the New York City area. She discovered that these marriages were affected by several factors, such as generation in the U.S. (the more generations, the more likely it is that intermarriage will occur), sex ratio (unbalanced ratio between Chinese males and females, with the latter outmarrying more often), age (those who intermarry do so when they are older), education (better-educated Chinese intermarry more often than those who are less-educated), and occupation and income (outmarried couples have better jobs and higher incomes). Furthermore, personal interviews yielded the finding that many of those who outmarry are viewed by their families and/or cultures of origin as rebellious and unconventional.

Qian (1999) also used 1980 and 1990 census information to examine intermarriage rates among Whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asians. As expected, in 1980 the rate of intermarriage in each racial/ethnic group was proportional to the size of that group, resulting in a range between 2% (for Whites) and 50% (for Asians). African Americans had the lowest intermarriage rates among the three minority groups. For African Americans and Latinos, higher educational attainment was associated with fewer endogamous (same-race) marriages, but this pattern did not apply to Asian Americans. In general, immigrants had more endogamous marriages than natives. For Whites and Latino Americans the percentage of endogamous marriages was about the same for men and women. However, for African Americans, men had a lower rate of endogamous marriage than women, and for Asian Americans men had a higher rate of endogamous marriage than women.

Qian (1999) also used a formula to calculate the probability of men and women from each ethnic/ racial minority group marrying Whites. He noted that in 1980 the rate of endogamous marriages was proportional to the size of the racial group. In that year, African Americans and Whites had a higher rate of endogamous marriages when compared to Latinos and Asians. The percentage of endogamous unions was significantly lower for both African Americans and Latinos as educational attainment increased. However, this pattern was not apparent for Asian Americans. Further, between 1980 and 1990 endogamous marriages decreased for both male and female African Americans and Whites across all educational categories. For Latinos the same pattern occurred across some educational categories. For Asian Americans there was no change between 1980 and 1990. In general, African American and White natives had higher rates of endogamous marriage than their immigrant counterparts, but the opposite pattern was true for Latinos and Asians.

Liang and Ito (1999) studied the intermarriage rates of five Asian groups in the New York City metropolitan area: Chinese, Koreans, Indians, Japanese, and Filipinos. They compared the interracial marriage rates of these groups according to nativity, gender, and education. They stated that, in general, Asian women had much higher intermarriage rates than Asian men. U.S.-born Asians were also significantly more likely to intermarry than foreign-born Asians. Likewise, intermarried individuals were overwhelmingly similar in educational attainment, offering disconfirming evidence regarding Merton's hypothesis that minority men marry White women to exchange their high socioeconomic status for her higher social status. It is worth noting here that, to date, there is very little theoretical or research literature discussing intermarriage among Latinos as a group. A couple of exceptions are discussed in the section on Latinos and intermarriage on page 65.

### *Areas of Conflict for Intercultural Couples*

Several authors have discussed the challenges faced by intercultural marriages (Bean & Aiken, 1976; Gordon, 1964; Ho, 1990; Kiev, 1973; Mann & Waldron, 1977; Markoff, 1977; McGoldrick & Garcia-Preto, 1984; Rose, 1973). For example, as noted in Tseng, McDermott, and Maretzki (1977), Richard Markoff discussed some problem areas for intercultural marriages. These include problems in verbal and non-verbal communication, especially the latter, since it is used to a greater degree than verbal communication to convey emotional states and responses through gestures, body position, and vocal inflection. Differences in values can also be of great concern, such as when one partner has learned to value material security, while the other places more emphasis on spiritual fulfillment, or when one partner particularly values individual time while the other prefers to spend time as a family. Partners may also have different concepts of marriage, such as when one partner places a premium on love in the marital relationship and the other has chosen a partner based on economic and/or social considerations.

Another potential issue for intercultural marriages might be whether to make couple decisions based on the partners' individual preferences and needs, or based on family tradition or social convention. Prejudices and stereotypes may also play a role in marital conflict, such as when each partner views the other as a representative of his or her culture, thus causing distortion to the personality and role of the partner. Another source of conflict for intercultural couples, indicated Markoff, can be the level of involvement (or lack thereof) of the surrounding families regarding the couples' conflicts.

Mann and Waldron (1977) presented the area of childrearing as one of the main issues to be faced by intercultural couples. In fact, they stated that intercultural marriages may work well until children arrive. During the pregnancy, there may be much

preoccupation with the child's physical appearance, particularly if the mother-to-be is White. This has also been discussed elsewhere in the literature (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Kiev, 1973). In addition, it is clear that childrearing practices vary from culture to culture, and these differences can have a great impact on the parents' relationship. For example, given that Japanese mothers spend most of their time with the baby during the first year of life, a Caucasian husband may feel rejected by his wife during this period. Every developmental stage of the child may become a crisis for the couple.

In addition to these difficulties, the racial identification of the child may become an area of conflict for him or her because of physical differences from other children. The child may experience discrimination, and he or she may come to feel ambivalent about his or her race or ethnicity. When intercultural or interracial children exhibit behavioral problems, this is often attributed to a conflict between the parents around issues of culture or race. Couples' therapy is thus in order (Ho, 1990; Sung, 1990).

In Stuart (1973), Wagatsuma discussed the implications of Japanese racial feelings about White Americans for interracial marriage, starting with the many marriages among Japanese brides and U.S. soldiers during the late 1950s through 1970. Many of these marriages have been unsuccessful, wrote the author, because of discrepant gender-role expectations on the part of both partners, which went unfulfilled, partly because these gender-role expectations were based on stereotypes (e.g. the subservient, quiet Japanese wife and the strong and chivalrous U.S. husband). The issue of stereotypical gender-role expectations has been supported by other authors (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Markoff, 1977; Rohrlach, 1988; Soncini, 1997). For example, Markoff wrote that the idea of a submissive and supportive Asian wife may be quite appealing to a Western man who fears being dominated and feels incapable of competing for control in the relationship.

Biever, Bobele, and North (1998) cited many challenges that intercultural couples commonly face. Among these are disapproval or awkwardness from the partners' family or friends, as well as conflict over sex-role expectations, attitudes towards work and leisure, holiday traditions, expression of affection and problem-solving strategies that are culturally based. In addition, parenting styles tend to reflect cultural differences and affect relationships with extended family members. Because difficulties in an intercultural relationship may be attributed to the personality traits or to the emotional problems of the partner, rather than to cultural differences, the potential for conflict is considered to be high, particularly if the couple does not discuss such cultural differences.

Chan and Wethington (1998) also discussed some difficulties that interracial couples are likely to encounter. Some of these are family opposition, cultural and gender-role differences, and challenges in raising biracial children. They briefly commented on the differential stability of racial combinations. They asserted that some combinations of spouses occur more frequently than others, and some may encounter more opposition from family and from society because of the historical relationship between two groups, physical appearance, and number of generations in the U.S., for example. For his part, Ho (1990) pointed out that areas of conflict for the intermarried couple include food and dining etiquette, festivities and observances, friendships and social networks, financial management, different religions, sexual adjustment, and childrearing practices.

Fontaine and Dorch (1980) emphasized the area of communication as a challenging one in close intercultural relationships, including, of course, marriage. They discussed the issue of *attributional conflict*, that is, "differences in the perceived cause of a given event in the relationship (p. 331)." *Attributional ambiguity*, on the other hand, refers to uncertainty about the cause of events in the relationship. In either case, intercultural

partners can attribute problems to sources either internal to the relationship (e.g., personality differences) or external to the relationship (e.g., opposition from family and/or friends).

Fontaine and Dorch (1980) applied their theory to a study comparing the problems and benefits experienced by couples who were intercultural in terms of religion, ethnicity, and country of origin to intracultural couples. They found that interethnic couples reported more external problems (e.g., problems with community, friends, and family) than intraethnic couples. With regard to internal problems, there were no differences between intraethnic and interethnic couples, and the latter group actually reported feeling more satisfied with their family lives. Inter-country-, and intra-country-of-origin couples reported no differences in severity of external problems, but intra-country couples reported more dissatisfaction with the amount of time spent together (an internal factor). Thus, intra-country-of-origin couples attributed more problems to internal causes while interethnic couples attributed more problems to external factors. Interreligious couples showed no difference from intrareligious couples in perceptions of either internal or external problems.

To test their hypothesis that attributional ambiguity would thwart problem-solving and thus erode relationships long-term, Fontaine and Dorch (1980) next divided the couples into short-term and long-term couples by using a median split. The median for the interethnic couples was 14 years, for intercountry couples it was 12 years, and 13 years for interreligious couples. As expected, long-term interethnic couples reported more severe internal and external problems than did short-term intraethnic couples (because more attributional ambiguity was expected in the former). Intercountry-of-origin couples who had been together long-term reported fewer problems than did intercountry couples who



had been together for a shorter period of time. No differences were identified in problem severity among long-term and short-term interreligious couples.

Rohrlich (1988) also discussed the role of communication in what she called *dual-culture marriage*, based on her literature review on the subject. Two communication variables that Rohrlich thought particularly important were self-disclosure and decision-making power. High degrees of self-disclosure and a satisfactory power distribution, she concluded, are likely to lead to success in any marriage, including dual-culture marriages. The author offered four guidelines that she believed would be helpful in supporting the long-term success of intercultural couples. She claimed to base these on the previous literature that she summarized in this article.

1. Each partner must be aware of the other's culture and the extent to which the partner is attached to and is a product of his or her culture.

2. Before there can be sensitivity to cultural differences, there must be full awareness of those differences. That is, cultural differences are not to be ignored, but rather discussed openly, as well as the feelings of each partner around these differences.

3. Communication in intercultural marriage is more effective if both partners are competent in the use of a common language and are free from "dysfunctional factors" such as a hearing impairment.

4. The partners must continue to communicate about their cultural differences as long as the marriage lasts. Both partners should demonstrate tact, understanding, and good listening skills.

Rohrlich's (1988) guidelines are consistent with Christensen and Shenk's (1991) contention that the greater the level of incompatibility between the partners, the more skill the couple requires to negotiate their differences. This also supports the importance of

studying the communication and conflict-resolution processes of Latino-White couples. One might expect that Latino-White couples who can successfully and satisfactorily resolve their differences would experience the same levels of marital satisfaction as Latino-Latino or White-White couples, though it may well require more effort on their parts.

### *Marital Adjustment in Intercultural Couples*

In recent years, researchers have paid attention to the strengths of intercultural marriages, as well as to the variables that help them succeed (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Chan & Wethington, 1998; Crohn, 1995, 1998; Davidson, 1992). These authors aid in dispelling the myth that intermarriage is necessarily ridden with pathology and plagued by constant conflict.

In Tseng, McDermott and Maretzki (1977), Tseng defined a successful marriage as meaning "that both husband and wife are well-integrated, working with each other harmoniously for the mutual satisfaction and achievement of common objectives" (p. 93). Based on his clinical observations, he also pointed to what he believed were essential qualities of successful marital adjustment, such as each partner having the ability to be himself or herself, each partner being a focus of the other's affection, and each partner deriving pleasure from the marriage. He indicated that these characteristics must also be present in an intercultural marriage. Tseng proposed several patterns of intercultural adjustment:

1. "One-way adjustment": one partner completely adopts the cultural patterns of the other, such as when one partner is required to convert to the other's religion.

2. "Alternative adjustment": the partners cannot find a way to mix both of their cultures, and neither is willing to give up his or her culture. The solution is to adopt the cultural patterns of each of the partners at different times. For example, having a family get-together on the wife's birthday, so she can feel close to her family, and spending the following weekend out-of-state to please the husband.

3. A "mid-point compromise": the partners discuss their perspectives and arrive at a solution based on compromise. Each gets to express his or her needs and ideas, and the other gets to learn more and understand more about the partner's culture.

4. The "mixing" adjustment: both partners combine their cultural patterns in either a random or carefully planned fashion; for example, preparing meals including Chinese and Puerto Rican dishes for a birthday celebration.

5. A "creative" adjustment: each partner decides to give up certain aspects of his or her culture, and both develop a new, third culture of their own.

Soncini (1997) also described four stages of intercultural marriage which may be useful, not only in understanding marital adjustment, but also in treating such couples in therapy:

1. The pre-marital or "fusion" stage: the couple maximizes their similarities and minimizes or ignores their differences.

2. The "honeymoon" stage: the couple is more aware of their differences, but are filled with optimism that these differences are not a source of conflict, but rather an advantage to their relationship. The couple are optimistic and seek to integrate the two cultures as much as possible. On the other hand, the couple may begin to suffer strain and deal with conflict, which may cause them to divorce.

3. The "settling in" phase: the couple is less idealistic and begin to rely on old habits and expectations of the relationship and of the partner. Cultural differences previously ignored or minimized begin to cause conflict and discomfort.

4. The "cultural transition" phase: Soncini quoted Falicov (1986) to explain that the main task of the couple in this stage is to arrive at a new view of their cultural differences, and to develop their own system of dealing with them. Ideally, the couple will be able to negotiate conflicts and to develop a new culture that integrates the best of the cultures of both partners.

Although the patterns and phases of marital adjustment were not explored in the current study, it is important for these to be empirically validated with Latino-White marriages, as well as with other types of intercultural matches. Intercultural couples and practitioners could then be educated regarding the adjustment processes, which would allow them to "normalize" some of the challenges that arise with each pattern and at each stage, as well as offer couples more options for coping with such challenges.

*Factors contributing to marital adjustment.* McGoldrick and Garcia Preto (1984) listed some factors that they believe moderate adjustment in intermarriage: the degree of value discrepancy or similarity among the partners, different degrees of acculturation, religious differences, racial differences, the gender of the spouse from each background, socioeconomic differences, familiarity of the partners with the other's culture prior to marriage, and the degree to which emotional conflicts within the family of origin have been resolved by each partner.

Soncini (1997) proposed a list of factors that influence successful adjustment in intercultural marriage: sharing common goals and values; cross-cultural awareness; liking

the spouse's culture; having a realistic expectation of cultural differences, that is, expecting that there will be conflicts and misunderstandings; self-esteem and self-worth (in each partner); a spirit of adventure, one that is long-lasting as opposed to fleeting; a sense of humor; and support of family, friends and society.

Chan and Wethington (1998) outlined their own list of factors contributing to interracial couples' marital success. These included demographic characteristics (interracial couples tend to be older, more educated, and have higher incomes than monoracial minority couples), each partner's flexibility and resourcefulness in dealing with individual differences, marrying for love, community acceptance (many intermarriages occur in California), availability of same-race partners (when there is a sharp demographic unbalance in members of one group and another group, more intermarriage will occur), and social networks (many interracial couples have large non-kin networks who provide support).

Ho (1990) proposed that there are actually advantages to intercultural marriage. These encompass more thorough preparation for marriage; greater degree of commitment; greater degree of self-other differentiation; greater degree of acceptance, tolerance and respect; broader opportunities for learning and growth; greater opportunities (for learning and self-expression) and perspectives for children; children being more accepting of differences in others; and greater vitality in family living.

It must be noted that the focus in this study is on marital satisfaction as opposed to marital adjustment. In order to evaluate the latter, a combination of self-report and observational methods would be needed, and measures would have to be repeated at several points in time, since adjustment is an ongoing process. Nevertheless, some of the above-named factors implicated in intercultural marital adjustment are also likely to affect

Latino-White couples' marital satisfaction. Thus, Latino-White marriages were compared to Latino-Latino and White-White marriages on some of those same variables, including education level, income, age, acculturation level, and spiritual beliefs. Other "adjustment" variables, such as familiarity with the partner's culture and having realistic expectations of cultural differences, would be best assessed in future studies using qualitative methods.

#### *Marital Satisfaction in Intercultural Marriage*

The limited literature available on intermarriage and marital satisfaction has yielded inconsistent findings (Durodoye, 1994). This supports the need to conduct research exploring the relationship between these two variables. As mentioned earlier, most of the literature on this topic is clinically based, and empirical data are urgently needed to gain a fuller understanding of the dynamics of intercultural couples. In addition, relationship dynamics in intercultural couples outside of Black-White marriages have only begun to be explored, so research with Latino-White couples would help to expand the current literature.

Some of the literature presently available on intercultural couples (as discussed in Chapter II) has emphasized communication and conflict-resolution difficulties in these marriages, which is then assumed to contribute to a decrease in marital satisfaction. Such a decrease has not been empirically supported, nor have separation or divorce rates been documented for intercultural couples. In fact, in their study comparing interethnic White-Mexican American couples to monoethnic White and monoethnic Mexican American couples, Negy and Snyder (2000) reported finding no difference in overall levels of relationship satisfaction among the three groups.

Thus, marital satisfaction and the variables that contribute to it in intercultural marriages are beginning to be examined. Given the theoretical and research literature presented in this literature review, it is this author's contention that the variables of communication and conflict-management contribute to marital satisfaction substantially, and that examining these processes more closely in Latino-White intercultural couples might help to identify key ingredients to enhance marital adjustment and satisfaction in these marriages. Such information could then be helpful in future research and in clinical practice.

#### *Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Relationships*

As noted previously, virtually nothing is known about conflict resolution and communication processes in intercultural relationships. There are two notable exceptions. Sodeani and Gudykunst (1987) examined Japanese-North American intercultural dating-couples' strategies for dealing with surprising events (e.g., unexpected feelings expressed by the partner, stereotyping, surprising happenings at social events, contradiction between words and deeds) as well as the effect of such events on the perceptions of the partner and of the relationship. They also looked at the effect of uncertainty on relationship intimacy. Trust in the relationship was more affected by surprising events for the Japanese partners. At the same time, the Japanese lovers expressed more understanding of the partners than did North-American lovers. Overall, intercultural lovers used more direct communication about the surprising event when it increased uncertainty in the relationship, and they avoided discussing the events when uncertainty was reduced.

For his part, Killian (2001) wrote about the adjustment process in Black-White intercultural marriages. He interviewed spouses both separately and conjointly regarding

their experiences of their life together, their perception of how others perceive them, and their negotiation of gender, racial, and class differences. He reported that Black spouses demonstrated greater sensitivity to and awareness of social resistance than their White partners. Further, while some couples expressed satisfaction in being able to negotiate conflict, the nature of negotiations took several forms. For some couples this involved accepting their differences and agreeing to disagree, as well as willingness to discuss issues on which they did not agree. For others this involved creating new rituals and rules, yet others used compromise. Another group of couples expressed frustration with their inabilities to address conflict effectively.

The current study may help to empirically support or to expand on Killian's (2001) findings about how intercultural couples perceive and deal with relationship conflict. Though specific conflict-resolution strategies were not explored here, the data did shed light on how Latino-White couples perceive their communication and manner of addressing problems, as well as how this compared to the way LL and WW couples perceive the same relationship dynamics.

As noted previously, adaptation/fit factors are connected to the marital satisfaction and adjustment of couples in general, as well as of intercultural couples. In this model, acculturation is seen as an adaptation/fit variable that may be particularly important in Latino-White marriages.

### *The Role of Acculturation*

Acculturation has been defined as a "complex, multidimensional process of learning that occurs when individuals and groups come into continuous contact with different societies" (Stephenson, 2000, p.77). It is a construct that has received increasing



attention in the past twenty years, and many methods have been developed for measuring it (Thompson, 1999). Many such instruments measure acculturation in Latino populations, both because of the sizable representation of Latinos in the United States, and because acculturation has been shown to be important in assessing the validity of certain clinical measures, as well as the effectiveness of mental-health services (Thompson, 1999).

Two main models have been devised to understand the phenomenon of acculturation. The unidimensional or unidirectional model is based on the assumption that acculturation to one culture is necessarily associated with disengagement from the culture of origin (Marin & Gamba, 1996; Thompson, 1999; Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993; Stephenson, 2000). This is consistent with the assimilation mode of acculturation. Assimilation, as Stephenson (2000) pointed out, entails moving away from one's culture while immersing fully into the dominant culture.

Sanchez and Fernandez (1993) explained that the unidimensional model of acculturation leads one to ignore the fact that members of ethnic minorities may express various levels of adherence to the dominant culture and to their own culture. Further, unidimensional models do not allow for the possibility that an individual may be strongly involved in both cultures; thus biculturalism is not an option.

As can be expected, early acculturation instruments were developed based on this theoretical perspective. Some of these instruments include the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA), the Short Acculturation Scale for Latinos (SASH), and the Behavior Acculturation Scale (BhAS) (Thompson, 1999).

Newer acculturation measures, however, employ a bidirectional perspective. That is, they are centered on the assumption that one or more cultures can be added to one's culture of origin, without this necessitating the abandonment of the latter (Thompson,

1999). Therefore, bidimensional models better encompass the complexity of the acculturation construct because they are based on the idea that the individual has the potential to be bicultural, that is, adopt elements of the dominant culture while retaining aspects of his/her original culture (Thompson, 1999).

Sanchez and Fernandez (1993) clarified that biculturalism is different from mere identification with two or more ethnicities because, unlike identification, biculturalism entails being able to function competently in two cultures. These authors also proposed that adopting a bicultural identity leads to minorities' healthy psychological adjustment whereas ethnic divergence leads to stress. For his part, Dana (1996) contended that "knowledge of the multidimensional nature of acculturation, a focus on the components of the process, and a substantial research context are now necessary for ethical assessment practice" (p. 322).

Thus, when it comes to acculturation assessment, a bidirectional or bidimensional perspective is not only advantageous but necessary. Some bidirectional/bidimensional measures of acculturation are the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale (BAS) and the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II).

While the role of acculturation in mental health is becoming clearer (Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993; Thompson, 1999), its role in marital satisfaction is not yet understood. Negy and Snyder (1997) noted the discrepancy of findings across several studies in this area. In their particular study with Mexican American couples, they showed that a higher rate of acculturation was associated with higher levels of marital distress for Mexican American wives, but was unrelated to husbands' marital satisfaction. They conjectured that this may have occurred because acculturation may play a larger role in the relationship of interethnic couples who have different cultural backgrounds and expectations. Further,

they noted that acculturation can be interpreted only in the immediate social context in which it takes place; thus they recommended that the influence of acculturation in marital relationships be studied with various minority groups with varying degrees of acculturation, as well as in different areas of the country.

In their 2000 study, Negy and Snyder found that for interethnic couples in which the wife was Mexican-American and the husband was White, the wives' levels of acculturation were positively correlated to their levels of satisfaction with gender roles and their satisfaction with their children, as well as to their husbands' dissatisfaction with children, their rates of conflict over child rearing, and satisfaction with financial management strategies. In couples where the husband was Mexican-American, acculturation did not relate significantly to any relationship dimensions (e.g., child rearing, gender roles).

Thus, acculturation clearly has an important role to play in the lives of persons of Latino descent living in the United States both individually and in marital relationships. Moreover, acculturation has already been demonstrated to play a crucial role in multiple relationship dimensions of Latino-White intercultural marriages (Negy & Snyder, 2000). For that reason, acculturation was examined in this study in the context of Latino-White marriages, specifically to assess its relationship to marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict resolution processes in these couples.

### *Latinos and Intermarriage*

Information on Latinos and intermarriage is virtually non-existent at this time. Qian (1999), whose study was described in a previous section, documented some information about the rates of intermarriage of Latinos in the United States. The study was

not focused exclusively on the intermarriage patterns of Latinos, but rather had the purpose of comparing the intermarriage rates of various ethnic groups in the United States.

In terms of research focusing specifically on Latino intermarriage, there seems to be only one study (Negy & Snyder, 2000). The authors compared the marriages of interethnic Mexican American-White couples, with the marriages of monoethnic Mexican-American couples and those of monoethnic non-Latino White couples. The groups were compared on multiple relationship domains, such as global relationship distress, marital satisfaction, problem-solving communication, sexual dissatisfaction, relationships with children, and family history of distress. In addition, interethnic couples were compared based on which partner, the husband or the wife, was the Mexican-American partner. The role of acculturation was also explored in relation to interethnic couples' scores on the relationship dimensions measured.

The researchers remarked that interethnic couples were more similar to the non-Latino White couples than they were to the Mexican American couples. Interethnic couples also reported lower levels of distress than Mexican American couples. This finding contradicts previous literature, which suggests that intercultural couples experience more distress than monocultural couples (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Fontaine & Dorch, 1980; Ho, 1990; Rohrlich, 1988).

Thus, it becomes clear that, given the rate at which the Latino population in the U.S. is growing and the concomitant rise in Latino-White intermarriage, it is, not only advantageous, but also necessary that research with these couples be conducted to shed some light on the nature of such relationships and to guide mental-health practitioners in assisting these clients in their marriages.

### *The Current Study*

Because communication and conflict resolution have been demonstrated to be critical in the marital success of couples in general, Latino-White, Latino-Latino and White-White couples would be expected to have the same overall levels of marital satisfaction as long as they demonstrate effective communication and conflict-resolution strategies. However, the general literature on conflict management suggests that, when partners are incompatible in significant ways (such as one might say of culture and ethnicity, particularly when partners' acculturation levels are significantly discrepant), the communication and conflict-resolution processes may become more challenging, and coping efforts may lead to further distress (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997).

It must be noted that, although communication and conflict resolution have been identified as areas of conflict for couples in general, and these were assessed by the ENRICH in parallel with other relationship dimensions such as financial management and childrearing; communication and conflict resolution were examined separately because of their key roles in couple functioning, as noted in the literature review. Communication and conflict-resolution are seen by this researcher as core processes, which, if successfully implemented, can help the couple to resolve differences in any other relationship areas.

In this study, the researcher attempted to answer the following questions: Do Latino-White couples have more difficulty communicating and resolving conflicts than do LL or WW couples? Do LW intercultural couples experience less marital satisfaction than LL and WW couples? Do LW couples differ from LL and WW couples regarding areas of conflict? Do LW couples with less acculturated Latino partners have more difficulty in communicating and resolving conflicts than couples in which the Latino partner is more fully acculturated?

*Hypothesis 1.* Theoretical and empirical literature links marital satisfaction to communication, conflict-resolution, and adaptation/fit processes, suggesting that couples who report difficulty and/or incompatibility in these areas are significantly more likely to report less marital satisfaction than couples who report few or no such problems. In addition, the literature on intercultural couples suggests that they may experience more difficulties in communication and conflict resolution than other couples. Thus, Latino-White couples were expected to report significantly more difficulty in communicating, as well as more difficulty and less satisfaction with the way they resolve conflicts, than LL or WW couples. In addition, given the already established link between marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict-resolution processes, intercultural LW couples were likewise expected to report less marital satisfaction than LL and WW couples.

*Hypothesis 2.* Given some of the areas of conflict suggested in the literature on intercultural couples, intercultural LW couples were expected to experience more conflict than LL and WW couples in the areas of: (a) personality issues, (b) financial management (money), (c) leisure activities, (d) sexual relationship, (e) children and parenting, (f) family and friend relationships, (g) role relationship (gender roles), and (h) spiritual beliefs.

*Hypothesis 3.* If intercultural LW couples exhibit more difficulties in communicating and in resolving differences, these difficulties might be attributable, at least in part, to differences in acculturation. Thus, LW couples in which the Latino partner is less acculturated were expected to report more problems in these two areas, as

well as less marital satisfaction than LW marriages in which the Latino partner is more acculturated.

## CHAPTER III

### Method

The participants in the study were 120 couples (40 White-White, 40 Latino-Latino, and 40 Latino-White). This sample size was based on power analyses using a factorial ANOVA design, an alpha of .05, a medium effect size (.25), and a power level of .80 (Cohen, 1992). In efforts to help increase the demographic representativeness of the sample, as well as to enhance the external and internal validity of the study, two monocultural couple control groups were included, one Latino-Latino and one White-White. Given the relatively small number of Latino-White intercultural couples in existence, the researcher decided to include Latino partners from various countries in order to enhance the prospects of an adequate sample size for the study.

To be eligible for participation, the couples had to meet the following five criteria:

1. This was a couple study only. Both partners had to agree to participate for data to be valid.
2. All participants had to be legally married, heterosexual couples who had lived together for at least two years, in an attempt to control for the possible confounding effects of sexual orientation, lack of a legally binding commitment, and having had insufficient time to have experienced one's unique couple dynamics.
3. Couples must have had at least one child together, to allow for responses regarding satisfaction with parenting.



4. To be eligible for this study, participants needed to be: (a) Latino(a) and married to either another Latino(a) or to a White (non-Latino) partner or (b) White (non-Latino) and married to either another White (non-Latino) or to a Latino(a) partner  
 “Latino(a)” referred either to a person born in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country (i.e., one of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, or Venezuela) or to a person born in the United States whose parents were both born in a Latin American country and, if living in the United States, immigrated to the U.S. after age 18. “White” referred to a Caucasian person of non-Hispanic/Latino origin who was born in the United States and whose parents were both born in the United States or immigrated to the U.S. prior to age 18 and who are of Western and/or Northern European descent (i.e., from one of the following countries/regions: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, or Wales.
5. Latino participants were required to be able to read English, since all research materials were written in English.

Persons of Spanish or Portuguese descent were not included in either ethnic category above because these cultures share many similarities with both, the Latino and the Anglo cultures, thereby possibly creating a confound by blurring the distinctions between the two major cultural groups under examination. In addition, Spanish and Portuguese individuals, as well as Eastern European individuals, generally have a more recent history of immigration to the United States than do Western Europeans, which may move the level of acculturation of the “White” participants closer to that of the “Latino” participants, thereby

creating a confound. On that basis, persons of Eastern European descent were also excluded.

Attempts were made to obtain a national sample by recruiting participants from various states, including Missouri, Florida, New Jersey, California, Michigan, and New York, where the researcher had contacts who could facilitate the distribution of research materials. The couples were categorized into three groups: Latino-White intercultural couples (LW), Latino-Latino monocultural couples (LL), and White-White monocultural couples (WW).

An effort was made to recruit participants representing a broad range of ethnic and national backgrounds, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, and educational levels, as well as partners who had been married for varying amounts of time. However, keeping the sample equivalent in terms of these demographic variables was challenging because of the disproportionate representation of the types of couples available in the investigator's immediate geographical area.

## Measures

### *Demographic Questionnaire*

The participant couples completed a questionnaire including questions on age, ethnicity, nationality, age at immigration, parents' country of birth, parents' age of immigration, length of residence in the U.S., length of marriage, number of children, educational level, and income.

*Enriching, Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication & Happiness (ENRICH)*  
*Version 2000.*

(Olson, 2002). This inventory was originally developed by Olson, Fournier, & Druckman in 1983 as a research tool to describe marital dynamics. Currently ENRICH is also utilized as a diagnostic measure for couples seeking marital counseling and enrichment. The ENRICH inventory was modeled after a measure for premarital couples called Premarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation (PREPARE) developed by the same authors in 1979.

The ENRICH Version 2000 consists of a total of 165 items divided into twenty (20) subscales. Twelve (12) of these subscales are considered marital “content areas:” (a) Idealistic Distortion, (b) Marriage Satisfaction, (c) Personality Issues, (d) Communication, (e) Conflict Resolution, (f) Financial Management, (g) Leisure Activities, (h) Sexual Relationship, (i) Children and Parenting, (j) Family and Friends, (k) Role Relationship, and (l) Spiritual Beliefs; all contain 10 items, except for Idealistic Distortion, which has seven (7) items. Four (4) additional subscales are categorized as “couple and family map” subscales: (a) Couple Closeness, (b) Couple Flexibility, (c) Family Closeness, and (d) Family Flexibility; they are made up of 10 items each. Lastly, four (4) “personality assessment” subscales are included: (a) Self-Confidence, (b) Assertiveness, (c) Avoidance, and (d) Partner Dominance. Partner Dominance has seven (7) items while the other three include eight (8) items each. Questions from the Assertiveness, Avoidance, and Partner Dominance scales also appear in other subscales. The subscales are described below. It must be noted, however, that for the purposes of this study, only the main content areas of the ENRICH will be used in the analyses.

*Idealistic Distortion.* This is a validity scale that measures partners' tendencies to respond to questions in an unrealistically positive manner (e.g., "My partner and I understand each other completely"). High scores (60 and above) indicate a high level of idealism, a person who is unwilling or unable to accept difficulties in the relationship, or a person exhibiting a defensive attitude while completing the inventory. Low scores (30 and below) are indicative of a more realistic perspective of the relationship.

*Marital Satisfaction.* This scale provides a global assessment of marital satisfaction by including questions on ten relationship areas: personality characteristics (e.g., "Sometimes, I am concerned about my partner's temper"), communication, (e.g., "My partner is a very good listener"), conflict resolution (e.g., "To end an argument, I usually give in too quickly"), financial concerns (e.g., "We have difficulty deciding how to handle our finances"), management of leisure time (e.g., "My partner and I enjoy the same social and recreational activities"), sexual relationship (e.g., "It bothers me that my partner uses or refuses sex unfairly"), parental responsibilities (e.g., "We agree on how to discipline our children"), relationship with family and friends (e.g., "Our parents expect too much attention and/or assistance from us"), role responsibilities (e.g., "A career can be equally important to a man or a woman"), and spiritual beliefs (e.g., "My partner and I feel closer because of our spiritual beliefs"). High scores (60 and above) on this scale are indicative of compatibility and satisfaction with most aspects of the relationship. Low scores (30 and below) represent a lack of satisfaction as well as concern in various aspects of the marriage.

*Personality Issues.* This scale assesses an individual's perception of and satisfaction with the partner's behavior. Items are focused on traits such as tardiness, temper, moodiness, stubbornness, jealousy, and possessiveness, as well as on public demonstrations of affection and drinking and smoking habits (e.g., "Sometimes, I am concerned about my partner's temper"). High scores (60 and above) reflect satisfaction with and adjustment to the partner's behavior, while low scores (30 and below) reflect a low level of acceptance of partner's behaviors and/or lack of comfort with these behaviors.

*Communication.* Communication measures an individual's beliefs, feelings, and attitudes about the marital communication process. Questions center around the partners' level of comfort in sharing beliefs and feelings with one another, partners' perceptions of each other's manner of communication, and partners' perceptions of how well they communicate with each other (e.g., "My partner is a very good listener"). High scores (60 and above) on this scale indicate satisfaction with the type and level of communication occurring within the relationship, whereas low scores (30 and below) reflect a need to work on improving communication skills.

*Conflict Resolution.* This scale assesses a person's attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the presence of conflict and the resolution of conflict in the relationship. Items include topics such as partners' openness to recognizing and resolving conflicts, the strategies used for problem-solving, and the partners' satisfaction with the manner in which conflicts are addressed (e.g., "To end an argument, I usually give in too quickly"). Scores of 60 and above reflect realistic conceptions about the probability of conflict in the relationship, as well as satisfaction with how most relationship problems are resolved,

while scores of 30 and below indicate that there is an ineffective approach to conflict resolution as well as dissatisfaction with how conflict is managed in the relationship, and partners may tend to avoid disagreements rather than deal with them.

*Financial Management.* This is aimed at measuring the couple's attitudes and concerns regarding financial matters. Items address partners' tendencies to spend versus save, their awareness of and concern with credit and debt, the manner in which financial decisions are made, how they make money-management and other financial decisions, and their satisfaction with their economic status (e.g., "We have difficulty deciding how to handle our finances"). Scores of 60 or above represent realistic attitudes toward financial matters, as well as satisfaction with how finances are handled in the relationship, while those below 30 are indicative of significant concerns about financial management in the marriage.

*Leisure Activities.* This scale assesses each partner's preferences for spending leisure time. Items reflect topics like personal versus social activities, active versus passive interests, shared versus individual preferences, and partners' expectations as to how leisure time should be spent (i.e., as a couple or individually) (e.g., "My partner and I enjoy the same social and recreational activities"). High scores (60 or above) here show the partners' compatibility and/or consensus on the use of leisure time, whereas low scores (30 or below) reflect dissatisfaction with the use of leisure time in the relationship.

*Sexual Relationship.* This content area refers to partners' feelings and concerns about their affectional and sexual relationship. It includes questions on the satisfaction

with the expression of affection, level of comfort in discussing sexual issues, partners' attitudes toward sexual behavior, birth-control decisions, and feelings about fidelity (e.g., "It bothers me that my partner uses or refuses sex unfairly"). Scores of 60 and above are interpreted as satisfaction with the level of affection in the marriage, as well as a positive attitude about the role of sex in the relationship whereas scores of 30 and below suggest a concern with the role of sex in the marriage, dissatisfaction with levels of affection expressed in the marriage, and/or disagreement over birth-control decisions and sexual fidelity.

*Children and Marriage.* This area includes each partner's attitudes and feelings regarding having children as well as both partners' agreement on how many children are wanted. Items cover topics such as the awareness of the impact of children on the marital relationship, the couples' satisfaction with their roles and responsibilities in parenthood, compatibility regarding disciplining the children, and shared goals and values for the children (e.g., "We agree on how to discipline our children"). Elevated scores (60 or above) reflect marital consensus on whether to have children and how many children to have, a realistic concept of the impact of children on the marriage, and satisfaction with how parental roles and responsibilities are defined. Low scores (30 and below) reflect a lack of consensus regarding childbearing, concern with the impact of children on the relationship, and/or concern with the perception of parental roles and responsibilities.

*Family and Friends.* This category assesses the couple's concerns with and feelings about their relationships with relatives, in-laws, and friends. The questions measure each partner's perceptions of family and friends' attitudes toward the marriage, partners'

expectations about how much time should be spent with family and friends, partners' levels of comfort while in the presence of each other's family and friends, and satisfaction versus concern over relationships with family or friends (e.g., "Our parents expect too much attention and/or assistance from us"). Scores of 60 and above are interpreted as comfort with family and friend relationships while those of 30 or below are suggest discomfort in these relationships as well as potential for conflict.

*Role Relationship.* This subscale assesses partners' beliefs, feelings, and attitudes about marital and family roles. Questions center on occupational roles, household roles, sex roles, and parental roles (e.g., "A career can be equally important to a man or a woman"). High individual scores (60 or above) suggest a preference for egalitarian roles while low individual scores (30 or below) reflect the respondent's preference for traditional husband/wife roles (they do not reflect dissatisfaction). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with roles can be assessed from the Positive Couple Agreement Score (PCA), which will be described in the "scoring" section below.

*Spiritual Beliefs.* This category assesses attitudes, feelings, and concerns regarding religious beliefs and practices in the marriage. Items revolve around the meaning and importance of religion, participation in church activities, and partners' expectations about the role of religion in their marriage (e.g., "My partner and I feel closer because of our spiritual beliefs"). High individual scores (60 or above) reflect an individual's perception that religion is important to the marriage while low individual scores (30 or below) are indicative of a less traditional attitude that religion is not important in the marriage. Satisfaction is indicated by a high PCA, if both partners score either high or low, and



dissatisfaction is seen in a low PCA, if partners score differently on the individual scales.

PCA scores will be described on page 83.

*Couple Closeness and Family Closeness.* These content areas refer to the degree to which together and separateness are balanced, as well as the level of closeness experienced among members, both in the couple relationship and in the partners' respective families of origin. Items deal with amount of time spent together, feelings of emotional closeness, and cooperation among couple/ family members. An example of a Couple Closeness item is "We ask each other for help." A sample question in the Family Closeness scale is "Family members really enjoyed being together." High scores (70 and above) in either of these scales suggest excessive closeness to a point that can be detrimental, moderate scores (30-70) reflect a healthy balance between togetherness and separateness, and low scores (30 and below) are seen as indicative of lack of emotional closeness in the couple or family, which can also be an obstacle to relationships.

*Couple Flexibility and Family Flexibility.* These subscales measure an individual's ability to adapt to change both in the couple relationship and in the family of origin. Questions have to do with flexibility in responsibilities, rules and leadership roles. An example from the Couple Flexibility scale is "We seldom seem to get organized." A sample question from Family Flexibility is "Our family had a rule for every situation." High scores (70 or above) show a tendency toward constant change which produces instability, moderate scores (30-70) indicate a balance between change and stability, while low scores (30 or below) represent an inability to make changes in a functional way.

*Self-Confidence.* This refers to an individual's level of confidence in his/her abilities to accomplish what he/she wants. A sample item is "I tend to feel I am a failure."

*Assertiveness.* This subscale measures each partner's ability to express his/her feelings and voice his/her concerns to the other partner, such as in "I can express my true feelings to my partner." Items in this scale are shared with other scales.

*Avoidance.* Avoidance is defined as an individual's inability or unwillingness to deal with problems in their lives. "I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner" is an example of a question in this scale. All questions are also found in other subscales of the ENRICH.

*Partner Dominance.* This has to do with a person's perception that his/her partner is trying to exert control over him/her or his/her life. An example of an item is "Sometimes my partner seems to be too controlling." Again, items are shared with other subscales.

*Scoring.* The ENRICH is scored using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The numbers are then added to obtain the individual couple score, which can range between 10 and 50. Scoring is done by computer, and individual scores are corrected for conventionalization using the Idealistic Distortion scale scores to derive what is referred to as *Revised Individual (REV) Scores*. To calculate *REV* scores, an individual respondent's *raw score* (the sum of the person's responses to the items in a particular content area) is first converted to an *Individual Percentile (PCT) Score*,

which ranges between 0 and 100 percent and is based on comparing a person's raw score to the *National Norm Base* (made up of over 100,000 couples). Then, the *PCT Score* is revised downward by subtracting from it a fraction of the Idealistic Distortion Score for each person.

To offer a dyadic perspective of the relationship, Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores are also calculated for each of the content scales. PCA scores represent the percentage of items in each scale in which the couple agree in describing the marriage in positive terms, indicating relationship consensus and satisfaction. Therefore, PCA scores range from 0 to 100 percent. Generally, a PCA score between 80 and 100% indicates that a particular content area can be considered a couple "strength," and scores between 50 and 70% are labeled as a "possible strength." Scores in the range of 30 to 40% are interpreted as areas of "possible growth" for the couple, while scores between 0 and 20% suggest that further "growth" is needed in that target area.

*REV* and *PCA* scores are drawn independently, but are related in that high PCA scores (80-100%) are only possible if both partners have high *REV* scores, moderate PCA scores (40-70%) usually occur when one or both partners have moderate individual *REV* scores, and low PCA scores (0-30%) can be drawn only if both partners have low *REV* scores or if one has a high *REV* and the other a low *REV*. The Role Relationship is the only exception to this rule because a high PCA score can be obtained only if both partners' individual scores are both high or both low.

The internal consistency reliability coefficients for the ENRICH were reported by Olson (2002) based on a sample of 1,542 couples taking the ENRICH, as follows: Idealistic Distortion .83, Marital Satisfaction .86, Personality Issues .82, Communication .90, Conflict Resolution .84, Financial Management .82, Leisure Activities .75, Sexual

Relationship .85, Children and Parenting .78, Family and Friends .79, Role Relationship .78, and Spiritual beliefs .84. In addition, Olson reported Alphas of .84 for Closeness and .75 for Flexibility, as well as .82 for Self-Confidence, .73 for Assertiveness, .71 for Avoidance, and .73 for Partner Dominance. These values produced an average Alpha of .82.

Test-retest reliabilities were also reported by Olson (2002) using a sample of 115 couples, as follows: Idealistic Distortion .92, Marriage Satisfaction N/A, Personality Issues .81, Communication .81, Conflict Resolution .90, Financial Management .88, Leisure Activities .77, Sexual Relationship .92, Children and Parenting .89, Family and Friends .82, Role Relationship .90, Spiritual Beliefs .89, Closeness .83, Flexibility .80. Average test-retest validity was .86.

Concurrent validity has been established by the finding that ENRICH Marital Satisfaction scale (EMS) correlates .81 with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. In addition, construct validity of the measure has been supported through moderate correlations between ENRICH subscales and measures of family satisfaction (range .41 to .60) and life satisfaction (range .32 to .41) (Fowers, 1991). In addition Fowers and Olson (1989) documented that, in a validation study, all of the ENRICH scales were able to discriminate between satisfied and dissatisfied couples in 92.9% of the cases when using individual scores, and in 91.2% of the cases when using couple scores, thus supporting the inventory's discriminant validity.

One final note regarding the ENRICH is in order. The fact that many of the study participants were Latino would suggest that a Spanish version of this instrument would not only be appropriate, but would help to increase the sample's variability with regard to acculturation levels, thus lending the study further external validity. Selecting only Latino

participants who were proficient in reading English admittedly limited the variability of the sample in terms of acculturation levels and excluded a segment of participants who were not English-proficient. However, this exclusion was thought necessary because the Spanish version of the ENRICH has not yet been empirically validated. The fact that mostly couple scores were used in this study would have required the simultaneous analysis of scores from two different tests, which may or may not be psychometrically equivalent. This issue would have been further complicated in the case of Latino-White couples, since couple scores were the primary units of analysis and calculating such scores for this group would require that English and Spanish versions be combined, which again would be problematic from a psychometric standpoint.

*Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Latinos (BAS)*

(Marin & Gamba, 1996). This scale is based on a bi-directional or bidimensional model of acculturation whereby a person can learn or adapt to the new culture while retaining some aspects of his/her original culture. Thus, the scale measures two domains: Latino and non-Latino. For each of these two domains, there are twelve (12) items that are divided into three language-related subscales: language use (three items) (e.g., “How often do you speak English?” “How well do you speak Spanish?” “How often do you think in English?” “How often do you think in Spanish?”) , linguistic proficiency (six items) (e.g., “How well do you write in English?” “How well do you write in Spanish?” “How well do you understand music in English?” “How well do you understand music in Spanish?”) and electronic media (three items) (e.g., “How often do you watch television programs in English?” “How often do you watch television programs in Spanish?”). There are a total of twenty four (24) items.

The scoring is done by averaging the respondent's answers to the 12 questions making up each of the two domains (Latino and Non-Latino). This yields two scores per respondent. Possible average scores range between 1 and 4. A score of 2.5 can be used as the cutoff to determine level of adherence to each cultural domain. Scores of 2.5 or higher in either dimension are interpreted as indicating biculturalism. For the purposes of this study, these cutoff scores were used to form "acculturational categories," as suggested by Marin and Gamba (1996).

Only individual scores were used for this scale, and this measure was only given to Latino partners in Latino-White and Latino-Latino marriages. Latino partners scoring higher than a 2.5 in the Latino domain, and a 2.5 or lower in the non-Latino domain were included in the group labeled "more Latino." Those scoring higher than 2.5 in the non-Latino domain and a 2.5 or lower in the Latino domain were labeled "more non-Latino." A third category was formed to include those scoring higher than a 2.5 in each of the two domains, and this group was labeled "bicultural."

The BAS was standardized on a group of 254 adult Latino residents of San Francisco, California, of Mexican and Central American descent, most of whom were first-generation Latino Americans living in the United States. According to Marin and Gamba (1996), all of the subscales showed generally high internal consistency, with the highest alpha being .97 for Linguistic Proficiency in the non-Latino domain and the lowest being .81 for Electronic Media in the Latino domain. Alpha coefficients for the combined scores of the language-related subscales ranged between .90 (Latino domain) and .96 (non-Latino domain). It must be noted that the initial construction of the BAS included a Celebration subscale, which was composed of three items measuring patterns of

celebration and enjoyment of holidays typical of the Latino and non-Latino domains. This subscale was eliminated, however, because of poor validity coefficients.

Criterion validity was established by correlating BAS scores with seven criteria used in the development of other acculturation scales. The criteria were generation status, length of residence in the United States, amount of formal education, age at arrival in U.S., proportion of respondent's life lived in the U.S., ethnic self-identification, and correlation with acculturation score obtained through the Short Acculturation Scale for Latinos (SASH). Concurrent validity was established by correlating BAS scores with SASH scores (Marin & Gamba, 1996).

### Procedure

Volunteers were recruited on the basis of convenience primarily through word of mouth and personal appeals, which were often combined with the handing out of flyers. The next most successful strategy was mailing a letter and a flyer, combined with a follow-up phone call. Some prospective participants' mailing addresses were obtained via a third party (friend or acquaintance of the prospective participant) while other addresses were obtained from the membership list of a local Latino organization (the list was provided by the president of the organization).

When addressed personally or by mail/phone, participants were primarily recruited from churches and a local Latino cultural/social organization. Solicitation through newspaper ads was excluded because its cost/benefit ratio was deemed too low for this area. Recruitment via the school system was unavailable because the office for Research and Assessment of the Springfield school system denied permission based on confidentiality concerns and the proximity of the school year's end at the time that the

solicitation letter was mailed. Recruitment of Latino-White couples through organizations made up of interracial/ intercultural individuals was largely unfruitful, based on lack of response from members (as reported by the contact persons for each organization reached by the researcher). The researcher also solicited help from several local military bases, the population of which is often made up of intercultural families. However, there was a lack of response from the contact persons and/or a reported difficulty in identifying potential participants on base.

The recruitment flyer was available both in English and Spanish in order to maximize the initial pool of potential participants. Also, it was expected that the above recruitment strategies would increase the sample's variability in terms of age, education, socioeconomic status, occupation, nationality, and acculturation level (Latino participants).

Once the couples were identified and agreed to participate, a packet containing two sets of the measures (one for each spouse) was mailed or handed to them. All the conditions for eligibility, as well as the procedures for participation in the study, were clarified in the Informed Consent Form that each couple was required to sign and return to the researcher along with their materials. Two copies of the Informed Consent Form were included in each packet so that the couples could keep one for their records and mail the remaining copy. In addition, because of its relative complexity and importance, the Informed Consent Form was translated into Spanish in order to maximize Latino participants' understanding of this crucial information, thus enabling them to feel more comfortable and adequately informed to consent to participate. Latino-White and Latino-Latino couples received one copy of the consent form in English and the other in Spanish. Packets mailed or handed to Latino-White or Latino-Latino couples also included the



Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS) in addition to the ENRICH and the questionnaire. All measures were available in English only.

Each research packet was coded with a number-letter combination denoting the type of couple (i.e., LL= Latino-Latino; LW= Latino-White, and WW= White-White) as well as the number of each couple (i.e., 001, 002, etc.). In addition, inside each packet there were two response envelopes labeled either “husband” or “wife.” Participants were asked to complete the packet corresponding to them separately from their spouse and then to place their answer sheets in the corresponding response envelope in order to preserve the anonymity of individual responses. Only one ENRICH booklet was included in mailed packets to conserve research materials. Couples were asked to take turns using the booklet and to not write on it so that it could be reused. Participants were further instructed not to place any personally identifying information on any of the research materials, including the return envelope provided. Respondents also had the opportunity to call or e-mail the researcher anonymously with any questions or concerns about the study, or they could telephone or e-mail the project supervisor.

Although the letter-number code assigned to each couple could be matched to the participants' identifying information by the researcher, the list of codes was kept separate from the list of participant records, except when needed, as described below. There were five reasons for matching codes to participants.

1. Because this was a couple study, it was important that all materials belonging to a couple be matched together for data analysis.
2. The codes were used to aid the researcher in grouping the data from the three kinds of couples participating in this study: Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White.

3. Because data collection took place over several months, the codes were used so that the researcher could better monitor the flow of research materials; that is, which packets had been sent out and which had been received. This was important to avoid the unnecessary loss of research materials as well as to ensure that each participant couple received the complimentary informational packet on strengthening marital relationships.
4. Data gathered from the ENRICH were sent to the inventory developers for computer scoring. Since the inventories contained no identifying information, the identity of the participants remained unknown to the scorers. All records, including participants' addresses (needed for mailing out the packets) and telephone numbers or e-mail addresses (needed for following up on returning of the inventories) were kept in a locked file cabinet. These records were kept only until all data were collected and the thank you materials were sent out, then were shredded. Data from the research will be kept for three (3) years to allow for further analysis or comparison with the work of other researchers.
5. Many couples requested information regarding the outcome of the study and were mailed a summary of the results of the study.

Completion of the research packets was expected to take between 45 minutes and one hour per participant. However, during follow-up phone calls, several participants reported that completing the materials had taken them about one-half to two-thirds of the estimated time. Participants were asked to return *all* of the research materials once *both* spouses had completed their research packets. The packets had to be mailed *together* in the return envelope provided with the research packets so as to avoid the confusion of receiving separate materials.

Couples were instructed to return the materials--including their completed response sheets, the ENRICH booklet, a copy of the Informed Consent Form signed by both spouses, and the thank you sheet indicating whether they would like to receive a copy of the final study results-- by mail within two weeks. By and large, this time-line was not observed, particularly by the Latino-Latino and Latino-White couples, who often took as long as two to three months to return the materials. In the case of these latter two groups of couples, more follow-up phone calls than originally anticipated (as many as four) and increasing pressure from the researcher (stressing the importance that completing the study personally had for the researcher and the need to finish it promptly) were necessary to ensure the return of the materials. The reasons that the respondents cited for this delay were primarily busyness, personal crises (e.g., illness, death of a loved one, new job), and spouse's failure to complete his/her own portion of the research materials. However, at each follow-up, spaced about two to three weeks apart, on average, the couples expressed their continued willingness to be involved in the study, their embarrassment at not having returned the materials (despite earlier promises to mail them out soon), and their intention to mail the materials back promptly.

It must also be noted that, in the case of approximately 6% of the sample, the research materials were returned incomplete, so it was necessary for the investigator to re-mail the incomplete portions to the participants in question. Another 9% of the participants either misplaced their research packet, or reported the packet was lost in the mail, which required the researcher to mail new ones. These delays, which only occurred in the case of the LL and LW groups, further prolonged data collection. The final response/return rates for the three couple groups were approximately 77% for the WW couples, 47 % for the LL couples, and 75% for the LW couples.

There may be several reasons to account for the substantial delay in response and material return observed in the LL and LW groups compared to the WW group. One explanation may be that WW couples responded more promptly because most of them were approached personally by the researcher. This method of recruitment was possible because WW couples are abundant in the researcher's community (Springfield, Missouri). In addition, many of the WW participants were recruited at church (all three types of couples were solicited in their church settings, however), where their attendance of weekly mass made it fairly easy to hand out and personally collect the research materials within the desired time line. Moreover, the priests of the parishes in question assisted the recruitment effort by making an announcement about the study to the congregation, which may have rendered these couples more responsive to the researcher's efforts.

It must be noted that, in addition to soliciting participants at English-speaking masses, the researcher made repeated efforts to recruit LL and LW participants at Spanish-speaking masses. However, Latino parishioners responded in much lower proportion than did Caucasian parishioners at English-speaking masses. Part of this may be because many Latinos may not have met the study criterion of reading English. Another reason may have been fears concerning illegal immigrant status.

Secondly, most LL and LW couples were recruited either by mail (followed up with a telephone call), or through a third party (word of mouth). Third party contacts were necessary in order to reach a greater number of potential LL and LW participants, partly because the number of English-proficient Latinos is limited in the researcher's immediate geographical area (Springfield, Missouri), and partly because LW marriages are generally less abundant than monocultural unions. At the same time, the use of third parties in the recruitment of LL and LW marriages significantly complicated the follow-up with these

participants, since the latter were not familiar with the researcher herself and/or may not have been clear on the purpose of the research. Although this information was clearly stated in the recruitment materials, the prospective participants would have needed to be sufficiently motivated to read the information thoroughly. In addition, the third parties may not have placed sufficient emphasis on the prompt return of the materials, and in some cases did not provide the researcher with the names and phone numbers of the couples whom they contacted to participate so that she was unable to follow up directly.

Another factor possibly accounting for the delay in the return of LL and LW packets may be Latinos' reputed more relaxed attitude toward time as compared to Caucasians. Also, Latinos may not be used to participating in research and may not see it as particularly important or relevant. If so, these participants may have viewed their involvement in the study more as a favor to the researcher than as something that could benefit them as a group. This may be especially true for individuals with less education, who would thus have less exposure to research as an enterprise.

### Data Analysis

Once the couples returned their research packets, the materials were sorted according to type of form (e.g., ENRICH answer sheets, Demographic Questionnaires, Informed Consent Forms) and group (i.e., WW, LL, and LW). ENRICH answer sheets were sent to the developers for computer scoring. The scorers entered the computer-generated data into an SPSS 11.5 file, which was e-mailed to the researcher. Again, no participant identifying information was available to scorers, who used only numbers assigned by the researcher to list the scores. Once the researcher received the SPSS file,

she added the type of couple (i.e., WW, LL, LW), as well as other pertinent demographic and acculturation information to the file.

Analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were employed throughout the study to compare the intercultural LW couples, LL couples, and WW couples on a variety of areas. Unless otherwise specified, all dependent variable scores used were Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores. ANOVAs, rather than multiple analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were employed, following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) recommendation to use ANOVAs rather than MANOVAs when the dependent variables (DVs) are highly positively correlated (such as might be expected with education, income, and age) or when the dependent variables are factor or component scores (as would be the case when using ENRICH subscales as DVs). The authors indicated that using MANOVA in these cases is wasteful because multivariate tests have less power than univariate tests, yet there is little difference in the results they can yield. To correct for the familywise Type I error inherent in multiple comparisons, the authors suggested using Bonferroni corrections along with separate ANOVAs for each DV.

Thus, the first set of ANOVAs in this study was used to compare the three couple groups in terms of age, education, length of marriage, and number of children. The author later added more ANOVAs to explore the impact of other demographic variables, namely, employment status and number of years partners knew each other prior to marriage. Occupation and religion were also analyzed, but this was done using a Chi-square of independence, since these are non-linear variables. Individual scores were used for age, education, occupation, employment status, and religion. For the remaining variables, couple scores were employed in the analyses. In addition, age, education, income, and years married were analyzed based on data from the Demographic Questionnaire while

employment status, occupation, number of years knowing each other before marriage, number of children, and religious orientation were based on ENRICH categories.

In order to increase the linearity of education and employment status so that they would be better suited to an Analysis of Variance, the researcher adjusted the categories in the following manner. In the Demographic Questionnaire (see appendix H), the educational category “Licenciatura” (the equivalent of a Bachelor’s degree in Latin American countries) was collapsed with the “college graduate” category. In addition, the “other” educational category was eliminated because it did not follow in a linear fashion from the previous categories (which increased in level at regular intervals). Only four participants in the sample endorsed this category, and they indicated having technical training (e.g., cosmetology school, gemology). Because there was no category for technical training, these participants were included under the “some college” category. For employment status, the original order of the ENRICH categories was altered in order to create conceptual linearity in this variable. Specifically, the old categories, 1 = full-time, 2 = part-time, 3 = full & part-time, and 4 = unemployed, were changed to 1 = unemployed, 2 = part-time, 3 = full-time, and 4 = full & part-time.

It was planned that if significant differences emerged among the groups regarding any of these demographic variables, the variables in question would be used as covariates in future analyses. However, this option was unavailable because the variables on which differences were uncovered (i.e., males’ and females’ education, couples’ income, couples’ number of children, and years knowing partner prior to marriage) did not meet the criteria to be considered reliable covariates, as explained in Chapter IV (see pages 108-110).

In order to examine the impact of acculturation on the communication, conflict-resolution and marital satisfaction of intercultural Latino-White couples, and in order to

allow comparisons between Latinos in LL marriages versus those in LW marriages, all Latino partners completed the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Latinos (BAS). Each person completing the measure received two BAS scores ranging from 1 to 4: one in the Latino domain and one in the non-Latino domain. Marin and Gamba (1996) suggested a cutoff score of 2.5 to indicate low or high level of adherence to each cultural domain, thus enabling researchers to form "acculturational categories" (Marin & Gamba, 1996, p. 313). Based on these scores, Latino partners in LL and LW marriages were divided into three groups according to Latino partners' mode of acculturation, that is, "more-Latino," "more non-Latino," and "bicultural." These three categories are described on page 87 in the "measures" section.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one was that intercultural Latino-White couples would present significantly more difficulty in the areas of communication and conflict-management, as well as less marital satisfaction, than either of the two monocultural couple groups. Three separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted, as well as Bonferroni corrections in cases where the omnibus *F* test was significant. In each case the type of couple was entered as the IV, with ENRICH couple Communication scores being the DV in one analysis, ENRICH couple Conflict-Resolution scores being the DV in another, and couple Marital Satisfaction scores being the DV in the third.

The second hypothesis was that intercultural LW couples would present more conflict than LL and WW couples in the areas of personality issues, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, childrearing, family and friends, gender roles, and spiritual orientation. These areas were selected on the basis of previous research and



theorizing regarding intercultural couples. Although previous general marital literature has suggested similar areas of conflict for monocultural couples (e.g., money, childrearing, sexual dissatisfaction), because of the cultural differences that are likely to exist in intercultural couples, it was expected that these areas would be significantly more problematic for LW couples than for LL and/or WW couples.

To examine hypothesis 2, a series of one-way ANOVAs were run, followed by Bonferroni corrections for those ANOVAs that produced significant results. Again, ANOVA, rather than a MANOVA, were conducted, as described in the data analysis section, in keeping with Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) recommendation. The ANOVAs were run using the type of couple as the independent variable and the ENRICH couple scores from each of the above marital dimensions as dependent variables.

The third hypothesis was that Latino-White marriages in which the Latino partner was less acculturated would present more difficulty in communicating and in conflict management as well as less marital satisfaction than those in which the Latino partner was more acculturated. For these analyses the Latino partners in Latino-White and Latino-Latino couples were placed into one of three acculturational categories (as suggested by Marin and Gamba, 1996) -- "more Latino," "more non-Latino," or "bicultural"-- based their BAS scores, as explained previously.

Hypothesis 3 was tested out by running three separate one-way ANOVAs using acculturational category (i.e., 1 = "more Latino," 2 = "more non-Latino," and 3 = "bicultural") as the IV, and either couple Communication scores, couple Conflict-Resolution scores, or couple Marital Satisfaction scores as the DV in each ANOVA. Because each Latino partner in the sample obtained an acculturation score, individual BAS scores were used for the ANOVAs, and these were run separately for males and

females. In addition, analyses using BAS scores were first run separately by group (i.e., LL or LW), then in combination in order to make this analysis more robust, since most of the Latino participants (both in the LL and LW groups) fell in the “bicultural” category, and there were very few participants in either couple group who scored in the “more Latino” or “more non-Latino” categories.

To complement the above analyses, the researcher opted to perform a multiple linear regression to examine whether the acculturation (BAS) scores of Latino husbands' and wives' in the LL and LW groups (IV's) could predict these participants' individual or couple scores on Conflict Resolution, Communication, and Marital Satisfaction (DV's).

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

Now that the rationale, purpose, nature, and methods of the study have been described, this chapter is focused on the specific results obtained. The chapter is divided into two sections, one discussing the demographic differences discovered among the couple groups, and another presenting the results as they relate to the research hypotheses proposed in Chapter III. Tables are included whenever possible in order to add clarity to the information presented.

#### General Demographic Characteristics

Participants were recruited from various states in order to increase the representativeness of the sample. However, most couples came from the researcher's immediate area (Springfield, Missouri). Approximately 73 (60.8%) of the respondent couples were recruited from the Missouri/Kansas area, 21 (17.5%) came from Florida (primarily Miami), 19 (15.8%) were from New Jersey and New York, 4 (3.3%) were from California, and 3 (2.5%) were from Michigan. As expected, Latino participants ( $n=120$ ) represented a variety of national origins/ backgrounds. The largest proportion of Latinos in the sample was of Mexican descent (26.6%), followed by Puerto Ricans, (17.5%), and Panamanians (14.2%). However, people of many different Latin American countries were represented in the sample, including Cuba (7.5%), Nicaragua (6.7%), Peru (5.8%), Colombia (3.3%), Honduras (3.3%), Venezuela (3.3%), Bolivia (2.5%), Dominican

Republic (1.7%), Ecuador (1.7%), Uruguay (1.7%), Chile (.8%), and El Salvador (.8%). Another 1.7% of the Latino participants had been born in the United States and reported having mixed Latin parentage.

### Data Analysis

In order to assess for the existence of confounding variables, the investigator planned to compare the three couple groups regarding age, education, income, length of marriage, and number of children. However, other demographic variables of interest came to the investigator's attention and were added to the between-group comparisons. These variables are occupation, employment status, years partners knew each other prior to marriage, and religion. While most of the variables were analyzed using Analysis of Variance, occupation and religion were analyzed using a Chi-square of independence, since these are non-linear variables. Individual scores were used for age, education, occupation, employment status, and religion. For the remaining variables, couple scores were employed in the analyses. In addition, age, education, income, and years married were analyzed based on data from the Demographic Questionnaire while employment status, occupation, number of years knowing each other before marriage, number of children, and religious orientation were based on ENRICH categories. Finally, educational and employment status categories were altered as explained in the "methods" section (p. 94) in order to increase linearity and thus make these variables better suited for ANOVAs.

Significant between-group differences were uncovered regarding males' and females' levels of education, couples' income, couples' number of children, and years knowing each other prior to marriage. Table 1 offers means, standard deviations, and

*F* test results for each couple group on each of the target variables. While most of the data provided in Table 1 were based on categories from the ENRICH, some were drawn from the Demographic Questionnaire. In each case, the source of the information is appropriately indicated.

Males' education, as measured by the Demographic Questionnaire, varied strongly across groups (WW  $M = 7.08$ ,  $SD = 2.43$ ; LL  $M = 5.70$ ,  $SD = 2.47$ ; LW  $M = 7.62$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ),  $F(2,116) = 6.79$ ,  $p = .002$ . Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons showed that males in LW marriages were significantly better educated than those in LL marriages ( $p = .002$ ). The difference between husbands in WW couples and those in LL couples was also significant ( $p = .030$ ). There was no significant difference between males in WW and LW marriages. This analysis was followed up with an education frequency breakdown for each group, using the Demographic Questionnaire categories (1 = Some grammar school, 2 = Completed grammar school (finished grade 8), 3 = Some high school, 4 = High school graduate (finished grade 12), 5 = Some college, 6 = Associate's (2 yr.), 7 = College graduate/ Licenciatura, 9 = Some graduate school, 10 = Master's degree, 11 = Doctorate/M.D./ J.D.). Table 2 consists of a between-group frequency distribution of education level for both males and females.

With regard to females' education there was also a significant difference (WW  $M = 7.43$ ,  $SD = 2.35$ ; LL  $M = 5.80$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ ; LW  $M = 6.68$ ,  $SD = 2.35$ ),  $F(2,117) = 4.67$ ,  $p = .011$ , with wives in WW relationships emerging as significantly more educated than those in LL marriages ( $p = .008$ ). No significant differences were found between women in WW and LW couples, or between women in LL and LW couples. Table 2 shows the between-group frequency distribution on this variable.

Table 1

*Selected Demographic Characteristics of White-White, Latino-Latino and Latino-White couples*

Scale	Group						Effects
	White-White		Latino-Latino		Latino-White		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Male age (in years) (Demographic Questionnaire)	43.03	11.64	41.98	10.59	44.65	13.82	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = .497, <i>p</i> = .610
Female age (in years) (Demographic Questionnaire)	41.23	11.61	40.00	9.45	41.98	13.07	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = .302 <i>p</i> = .740
Male education (Demographic Questionnaire)	7.08 <sup>a</sup>	2.43	5.70 <sup>a</sup>	2.47	7.62 <sup>a</sup>	2.24	<i>F</i> (2, 116) = 6.79* <i>p</i> = .002
Female education (Demographic Questionnaire)	7.43 <sup>a</sup>	2.35	5.80 <sup>a</sup>	2.44	6.68 <sup>a</sup>	2.35	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 4.67* <i>p</i> = .011
Couple income (from Demographic Questionnaire)	7.50 <sup>b</sup>	3.03	5.80 <sup>b</sup>	2.84	7.63 <sup>b</sup>	2.58	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 5.22* <i>p</i> = .007
Male employment (based on ENRICH categories)	2.93 <sup>c</sup>	.47	2.93 <sup>c</sup>	.42	2.82 <sup>c</sup>	.68	<i>F</i> (2, 116) = .500 <i>p</i> = .609
Female employment (based on ENRICH categories)	2.00 <sup>c</sup>	.91	2.35 <sup>c</sup>	.86	2.03 <sup>c</sup>	.92	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 1.90 <i>p</i> = .155
Years married (in years) (Demographic Questionnaire)	18.23	13.20	13.75	9.41	16.55	13.48	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 1.38 <i>p</i> = .255
Years known before marriage (based on ENRICH categories)	2.25 <sup>e</sup>	1.00	2.83 <sup>e</sup>	1.03	2.23 <sup>e</sup>	.97	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 4.56* <i>p</i> = .012
Number of children (based on ENRICH categories)	2.45 <sup>f</sup>	1.15	1.83 <sup>f</sup>	.96	2.25 <sup>f</sup>	1.13	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 3.48* <i>p</i> = .034

*Note.*

- a= *Collapsed* Demographic Questionnaire educational categories are: 1= Some grammar school, 2 =Completed grammar school (finished grade 8), 3 = Some high school, 4 = High school graduate (finished grade 12), 5 = Some college, 6 = Associate's (2 yr.) Degree, 7 = College graduate/ Licenciatura (if educated in Latin America), 9 = Some graduate school, 10 = Master's degree, 11= Doctorate/ M.D./ J.D.
- b= Demographic Questionnaire income categories are: 1= \$0- \$9,999; 2= \$10K- \$19,999; 3= \$20K- \$29,999; 4= \$30K- \$39,999; 5= \$40K- \$49,999; 6= \$50K- \$59,999; 7= \$60K- \$69,999; 8= 70K- \$79,999; 9= 80K- \$89,999; 10= \$90K- \$99,999; 11= \$100K or more
- c= *Modified* ENRICH employment categories are: 1= Unemployed, 2= Part-time, 3= Full time, 4= Full & Part-time
- e= ENRICH years known partner before marriage are: 1= Less than 1year, 2= 1-2 years, 3= 3-4 years, 4= 5+ years.
- f= ENRICH categories for number of children are: 1= One, 2= Two, 3= Three, 4= Four, 5= Five or more
- \*  $p < .05$

Table 2

*Between-Group Frequency Distribution of Males' and Females' Educational Levels*

<i>Educational Category</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
<b>Males</b>			
1 = Some grammar school	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
2 = Completed grammar school	0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
3 = Some high school	5.0% (2)	12.5% (5)	2.5% (1)
4 = High school graduate	5.0% (2)	17.5% (7)	0.0% (0)
5 = Some college	27.5% (11)	25.0% (10)	20.0% (8)
6= Associate's (2 yr.) degree	7.5% (3)	10.0% (4)	7.5% (3)
7 = College graduate	20.0% (8)	7.5% (3)	22.5% (9)
8 = Licenciatura (educated in Latin America)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	0.0% (0)
9 = Some graduate school	10.0% (4)	5.0% (2)	15.0% (6)
10 = Master's degree	15.0% (6)	12.5% (5)	17.5% (7)
11 = Doctorate/M.D./ J.D.	10.0% (4)	2.5% (1)	10.0% (4)
12 = Other	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)

Table 2 (Continued)

<i>Educational Category</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
Females			
1 = Some grammar school	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
2 = Completed grammar school	0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
3 = Some high school	0.0% (0)	12.5% (5)	5.0% (2)
4 = High school graduate	10.0% (4)	15.0% (6)	10.0% (4)
5 = Some college	22.5% (9)	22.5% (9)	27.5% (11)
6 = Associate's (2 yr.) degree	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)	5.0% (2)
7 = College graduate	17.5% (7)	15.0% (6)	20.0% (8)
8 = Licenciatura (educated in Latin America)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)
9 = Some graduate school	15.0% (6)	7.5% (3)	2.5% (1)
10 = Master's degree	25.0% (10)	10.0% (4)	22.5% (9)
11 = Doctorate/M.D./ J.D.	5.0% (2)	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)
12 = Other	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)

The couple groups also differed in terms of income, (WW  $M = 7.50$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ; LL  $M = 5.80$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ; LW  $M = 7.63$ ,  $SD = 2.58$ ) with  $F(2, 117) = 5.22$ ,  $p = .007$ . Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed that WW couples reported significantly more income than LL couples ( $p = .024$ ), but had about the same earnings as LW couples ( $p > .99$ ). Similarly, LW marriages declared significantly more income than LL marriages ( $p = .014$ ). Table 3 shows the income range frequencies based on Demographic Questionnaire categories.

In order to shed further light on the between-group differences on education and income, the investigator performed ANOVAs comparing the couple groups with regard to males' employment status (WW  $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .47$ ; LL  $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .42$ ;



Table 3

*Between-Group Frequency Distribution of Couples' Income*

<i>Income category</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
1 = \$0-\$9,999	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
2 = \$10K-\$19,999	5.0% (2)	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)
3 = \$20K-\$29,999	0.0% (0)	12.5% (5)	7.5% (3)
4 = \$30K-\$39,999	15.0% (6)	20.0% (8)	2.5% (1)
5 = \$40K-\$49,999	2.5% (1)	17.5% (7)	12.5% (5)
6 = \$50K-\$59,999	17.5% (7)	5.0% (2)	5.0% (2)
7 = \$60K-\$69,999	5.0% (2)	10.0% (4)	10.0% (4)
8 = \$70K-\$79,999	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)	20.0% (8)
9 = \$80K-\$89,999	12.5% (5)	5.0% (2)	15.0% (6)
10 = \$90K-\$99,999	5.0% (2)	5.0% (2)	7.5% (3)
11 = \$100K or more	27.5% (11)	10.0% (4)	17.5% (7)

LW  $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = .68$ ), and females' employment status (WW  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = .91$ ; LL  $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = .86$ ; LW  $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = .92$ ). In addition, the researcher used a Chi-square test of independence to evaluate the relationship between couple group and males' and females' occupational categories. No significant results were produced when comparing WW, LL, and LW husbands or wives on either variable. Tables 4 and 5 detail the frequency distribution of occupational and employment categories across the three groups. All data are presented according to ENRICH categories.

The data on Table 4 suggest that women in LL marriages may be employed outside of the home more often than women in WW and LW relationships, yet a one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences among the groups regarding females' employment status.

Table 4

*Between-Group Frequency Distribution of Males' and Females' Employment Status*

<i>Employment Status</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
Male	(n= 40)	(n= 40)	(n= 39)
1= Unemployed	5.0% (2)	2.5% (1)	10.0% (4)
2= Part-time	0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)	2.5% (1)
3= Full-time	92.5% (37)	90.0% (36)	80.0% (32)
4= Full & part-time	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)
Female	(n= 40)	(n= 40)	(n= 40)
1= Unemployed	40.0% (16)	22.5% (9)	35.0% (14)
2= Part-time	20.0% (8)	22.5% (9)	32.5% (13)
3= Full-time	40.0% (16)	52.5% (21)	27.5% (11)
4= Full & part-time	0.0% (0)	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)

Table 5

*Between-Group Frequency Distribution of Males' and Females' Occupations*

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
Males	(n= 40)	(n= 40)	(n= 40)
1 = Clerical, Sales, Tech	7.5% (3)	17.5% (7)	5.0% (2)
2 = Executive, Doctor, Lawyer	25.0% (10)	15.0% (6)	15.0% (6)
3 = Factory worker, Laborer	0.0% (0)	12.5% (5)	0.0% (0)
4 = Homemaker	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
5 = Manager, Teacher, Nurse	22.5% (9)	10.0% (4)	25.0% (10)
6 = Self-employed	10.0% (4)	5.0% (2)	10.0% (4)
7 = Skilled/ Trades, Farmer	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)	10.0% (4)
8 = Student	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)
9 = Unemployed	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)	7.5% (3)
10 = Other	22.5% (9)	25.0% (10)	27.5% (11)

Table 5 (Continued)

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White ( <i>n</i> =40)	Latino-Latino ( <i>n</i> = 40)	Latino-White ( <i>n</i> = 40)
Females			
1 = Clerical, Sales, Tech	15.0% (6)	25.0% (10)	12.5% (5)
2 = Executive, Doctor, Lawyer	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)	7.5% (3)
3 = Factory worker, Laborer	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)
4 = Homemaker	27.5% (11)	17.5% (7)	22.5% (9)
5 = Manager, Teacher, Nurse	20.0% (8)	10.0% (4)	25.0% (10)
6 = Self-employed	5.0% (2)	5.0% (2)	7.5% (3)
7 = Skilled/ Trades, Farmer	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
8 = Student	10.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	5.0% (2)
9 = Unemployed	2.5% (1)	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)
10 = Other	10.0% (4)	30.0% (12)	10.0% (4)

For couples' number of children, the group means were as follows:  $M=2.45$  ( $SD = 1.15$ ) for WW couples,  $M=1.83$  ( $SD = .96$ ) for LL couples, and  $M = 2.25$  ( $SD = 1.13$ ) for LW couples. An ANOVA revealed a moderate effect for this variable,  $F(2, 117) = 3.476$ ,  $p = .034$ . Post-hoc comparisons revealed that WW couples had significantly more children than LL couples ( $p = .033$ ). The comparisons between LL and LW marriages and between WW and LW on number of children were non-significant.

Yet another significant difference was identified with respect to the amount of time that couples reported knowing each other prior to marriage (WW  $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ; LL  $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ; LW  $M = 2.23$ ,  $SD = .974$ ),  $F(2, 117) = 4.560$ ,  $p = .012$ , with partners in LL marriages declaring having known each other significantly longer than partners in WW ( $p = .035$ ) and LW ( $p = .026$ ) matches. No significant difference was discovered when contrasting spouses in WW and LW relationships.

Potential between-group differences regarding husbands' and wives' religious orientation were investigated using a chi-square test of independence, given the categorical nature of this variable. No significant between-group differences emerged in the religious

orientations endorsed by husbands and wives. Table 6 shows a frequency distribution of religious orientation by group. Interestingly, despite the lack of significant differences across couple groups, the table suggests that husbands and wives in WW marriages appear to subscribe to the same religion, whereas partners in LL and LW couples seem to evidence somewhat more discrepancy regarding their faiths. Further, it appears that females in LW marriages endorsed the “other” religious category more often than their WW and LL counterparts.

Table 6

*Between-Group Frequency Distribution of Males' and Females' Religious Orientation*

<i>Religious Orientation</i>	<i>Group</i>		
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White
<b>Males</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>
1= Catholic	55.0% (22)	70.0% (28)	42.5% (17)
2= Jewish	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
3= Protestant	22.5% (9)	10.0% (4)	30.0% (12)
4= Other	17.5% (7)	20.0% (8)	27.5% (11)
<b>Females</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>
1= Catholic	57.5% (23)	75.0% (30)	47.5% (19)
2= Jewish	5.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
3= Protestant	22.5% (9)	7.5% (3)	25.0% (10)
4= Other	15.0% (6)	17.5% (7)	27.5% (11)

To summarize, it appears that, in this sample, WW and LW couples were generally better educated and had a higher income than LL couples. Further, the WW and LW groups seem to be roughly equivalent to one another in terms of age, education, income, employment status, occupation, years of marriage, years of acquaintance prior to marriage, number of children, and religion, since no differences were noted between them on any of

these demographic dimensions. Moreover, looking at the distribution of educational levels, employment, and occupations, it seems that it is the males in the sample who most contributed to the differences along these demographic dimensions between LW and LL couples, as well as the similarity between WW and LW marriages.

In addition, it seems that women in LL marriages made markedly distinct occupational choices than wives in WW and LW relationships, though these differences were not statistically significant. Also, LL couples reported knowing each other longer than WW and LW couples prior to getting married. Finally, there appeared to be slight but non-significant differences in the religious orientations of husbands and wives in WW, LL, and LW marriages. This will be explored further in the “hypothesis testing” section.

Given the above differences in education, income, number of children, and years of acquaintance prior to marriage, it was anticipated that these variables might be used as covariates (CV) in future analyses to control for their effect on the dependent variables. The next step, then, was to test these variables to examine their viability as covariates. To be a viable covariate, a variable must meet several criteria: (a) It should be continuous, (b) it should be perfectly reliable and without error ( $r$  greater than .8 for non-experimental designs), (c) it should correlate with the dependent variable by .30 or higher and the correlation must be significant, and (d) it should not correlate with another possible covariate to a great extent (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

It was the investigator's estimation that the potential covariates could be considered highly reliable since measurement error was expected to be minimal for these variables because they constitute “factual” information about the couples, rather than abstract constructs. As expected, correlations among males' and females' education, and couples' income were highly significant. To test for the third assumption, the researcher performed

correlation analyses for males' education level, females' education level, couples' income, number of children, and years of knowing each other prior to marriage with each of the dependent variables (i.e., couple scores for Communication, Conflict Resolution, Marital Satisfaction, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Personality Issues, Role Relationship, Sexual Relationship, and Spiritual Beliefs).

Most Pearson correlations between dependent variables and potential covariates were non-significant, and others were moderately significant but showed a coefficient of less than .30. All correlations with DV's were carried out using ENRICH Positive Couple Agreement (PCA) scores. Males' education correlated negatively with Financial Management PCA ( $P = -.272, p = .003$ ) and with Leisure Activities PCA ( $P = -.197, p = .032$ ). Females' education correlated positively with Family and Friends PCA ( $P = .219, p = .016$ ) and Role Relationship PCA ( $P = .202, p = .027$ ). Couple income did not correlate significantly with any relationship dimensions. Number of children was negatively correlated with Marital Satisfaction PCA score ( $P = -.188, p = .039$ ), Financial Management PCA ( $P = -.211, p = .021$ ), and Role Relationship PCA ( $P = -.223, p = .014$ ). Finally, years of partner acquaintance prior to marriage did not correlate significantly with any dependent variables.

Although several correlations were statistically significant, none had a coefficient of .30 or more, thus, education, income, number of children, and years of acquaintance prior to marriage were automatically eliminated as viable covariates. It must be noted, however, that because the effect of these variables could not be covaried out, the results of between-group comparisons on marital dimensions must be interpreted with extreme caution. In order to lend greater validity to any results drawn from this study, replication

of these findings through future research is necessary, especially controlling for the influence of potential confounds, through ANCOVA, stratified sampling, or other methods.

Another note of caution worth making is that, in examining the couples' ENRICH Idealistic Distortion scores, the investigator discovered that, on average, these were elevated for males in the LL and LW couple groups. Scores of 60 or higher suggest that individuals are trying to present the relationship in a highly favorable manner, either because of unwillingness to acknowledge problems in the relationship or because of a defensive attitude in completing the measure. In the WW group, mean Idealistic Distortion scores were 56.25 ( $SD = 16.83$ ) for husbands and 55.43 ( $SD = 17.95$ ) for wives. In the LL group, the mean score for males was 62.43 ( $SD = 19.49$ ) and for females 59.73 ( $SD = 23.70$ ). In the LW group, men scored an average of 62.68 ( $SD = 19.50$ ) and women an average of 57.30 ( $SD = 19.40$ ).

Given that this is a research sample rather than a clinical sample, these average elevations are not surprising, yet such high scores on Idealistic Distortion should be considered when interpreting the results. It is interesting to note, though, that males in LL and LW groups have the highest means. Nevertheless, an ANOVA revealed no significant effects for group on Idealistic Distortion for either males or females.

### Hypothesis Testing

ANOVAs comparing White-White, Latino-Latino and Latino-White couples on Conflict Resolution, Communication, and Marital Satisfaction (couple scores only) yielded non-significant results. Thus, the first hypothesis, namely that LW couples would present greater difficulty in these areas than either WW or LL couples, was not supported.

However, in this sample, between-group differences on Communication and Conflict Resolution scores approached statistical significance ( $p = .172$  for Communication,  $p = .079$  for Conflict Resolution), suggesting that increasing the sample size, which would enhance statistical power, could lead to significance in a future study.

To test for hypothesis two, that LW couples would present greater distress and less satisfaction in the key relationship areas of personality issues, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, gender roles, and spiritual beliefs, one-way ANOVAs were again used to compare the three groups on the target dimensions. Family and Friends approached statistical significance ( $p = .119$ ), again suggesting that a larger sample size could lead to significance.

The only significant difference among the groups emerged for Spiritual Beliefs, (WW  $M = 77.25$ ,  $SD = 30.80$ ; LL  $M = 59.25$ ,  $SD = 30.08$ ; LW  $M = 59.25$ ,  $SD = 32.06$ ),  $F(2,117) = 4.50$ ,  $p = .013$ . Post-hoc analyses showed that WW couples reported significantly more satisfaction with the role of religion in their relationship than LL couples ( $p = .032$ ) and LW couples ( $p = .032$ ). No difference was found between WW and LL marriages, or between LL and LW marriages. Mean couple scale scores, standard deviations, score ranges, and  $F$  test results for each of the ANOVAs are detailed in Table 7.

In order to explore this finding in greater detail, the investigator followed-up with a between-group frequency distribution by gender and religious orientation. Table 6 shows this distribution. It is readily noticeable that husbands and wives in WW relationships largely subscribed to the same religion whereas in the LL and LW groups there was more discrepancy between the religions endorsed by husbands and wives.



Table 7

*Mean Couple Scale Scores and F Scores on the ENRICH by Group (WW, LL, LW)*

Table 7

<i>Relationship Scales</i>	<i>Group</i>			<i>Main Effect</i>
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White	
Communication	<i>M</i> = 42.75 <i>SD</i> = 26.41	<i>M</i> = 47.00 <i>SD</i> = 33.76	<i>M</i> = 55.75 <i>SD</i> = 33.43	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 1.79
Overall Mean= 48.50	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .172
Overall SD= 31.59	Max = 90	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Conflict Resolution	<i>M</i> = 31.25 <i>SD</i> = 26.62	<i>M</i> = 35.00 <i>SD</i> = 28.38	<i>M</i> = 45.00 <i>SD</i> = 28.73	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = 2.59
Overall Mean= 37.08	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .079
Overall SD= 28.30	Max = 90	Max = 90	Max = 100	
Marital Satisfaction	<i>M</i> = 55.75 <i>SD</i> = 29.26	<i>M</i> = 61.00 <i>SD</i> = 28.54	<i>M</i> = 55.25 <i>SD</i> = 30.30	<i>F</i> (2, 117) = .470
Overall Mean= 57.33	Min = 0	Min = 10	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .626
Overall SD= 29.24	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Children and Parenting	<i>M</i> = 66.00 <i>SD</i> = 23.73	<i>M</i> = 66.75 <i>SD</i> = 26.25	<i>M</i> = 66.50 <i>SD</i> = 23.70	<i>F</i> (2,117) = .010
Overall Mean= 66.42	Min = 20	Min = 10	Min = 30	<i>p</i> = .990
Overall SD= 24.39	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Family and Friends	<i>M</i> = 67.50 <i>SD</i> = 22.04	<i>M</i> = 55.75 <i>SD</i> = 27.91	<i>M</i> = 62.50 <i>SD</i> = 25.70	<i>F</i> (2,117) = 2.17
Overall Mean= 61.92	Min = 20	Min = 10	Min = 10	<i>p</i> = .119
Overall SD= 25.58	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Financial Management	<i>M</i> = 44.75 <i>SD</i> = 31.46	<i>M</i> = 50.50 <i>SD</i> = 32.66	<i>M</i> = 50.25 <i>SD</i> = 32.30	<i>F</i> (2,117) = .409
Overall Mean= 48.50	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .665
Overall SD= 31.98	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Leisure Activities	<i>M</i> = 43.00 <i>SD</i> = 18.97	<i>M</i> = 46.50 <i>SD</i> = 26.56	<i>M</i> = 43.25 <i>SD</i> = 34.33	<i>F</i> (2,117) = .276
Overall Mean= 44.25	Min = 10	Min = 0	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .759
Overall SD= 23.36	Max = 80	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Personality Issues	<i>M</i> = 37.00 <i>SD</i> = 25.34	<i>M</i> = 37.25 <i>SD</i> = 30.88	<i>M</i> = 38.75 <i>SD</i> = 29.72	<i>F</i> (2,117) = .043
Overall Mean = 37.67	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	<i>p</i> = .958
Overall SD = 28.51	Max = 90	Max = 100	Max = 100	

Table 7 (Continued)

<i>Relationship Scales</i>	<i>Group</i>			<i>Main Effect</i>
	White-White	Latino-Latino	Latino-White	
Role Relationship	$M = 72.75$ $SD = 17.39$	$M = 67.50$ $SD = 23.39$	$M = 66.50$ $SD = 22.82$	$F(2,117) = .987$
Overall Mean = 68.92	Min = 40	Min = 20	Min = 10	$p = .376$
Overall SD = 21.37	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Sexual Relationship	$M = 53.25$ $SD = 30.42$	$M = 55.25$ $SD = 36.30$	$M = 52.50$ $SD = 33.03$	$F(2,117) = .073$
Overall Mean = 53.67	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	$p = .930$
Overall SD = 33.08	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	
Spiritual Beliefs	$M = 77.25$ $SD = 30.80$	$M = 59.25$ $SD = 30.08$	$M = 59.25$ $SD = 32.06$	$F(2,117) = 4.50^*$
Overall Mean = 65.25	Min = 0	Min = 0	Min = 0	$p = .013$
Overall SD = 31.89	Max = 100	Max = 100	Max = 100	

While there was no statistically significant difference across couple groups on religious orientation based on a Chi-square test of independence, a follow-up factorial ANOVA showed a statistically significant effect of religious orientation on Spiritual Beliefs couple scores in the WW group only. Specifically, a main effect emerged for females' religious orientation and for the interaction of male by female religious orientation. No similar effects emerged in either the LL or the LW couple groups.

To examine the third hypothesis, that Latino-White marriages in which the Latino partner is less acculturated would present more difficulty in communication, conflict management, and marital satisfaction than those in which the Latino partner is more acculturated, the investigator first divided the LW couples into acculturational categories, namely "more Latino," "more non-Latino" or "bicultural" based on the results of the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). There were a total of 120 Latino participants (but only 119 BAS scores, since one wife failed to complete it) in the sample,

which consisted of 240 individuals (120 couples). In the LW group, 32.5% (13) of the couples consisted of Latino men married to White wives, whereas 67.5% (27) of the couples were formed by Latina women married to White husbands. All in all, 79 of the BAS scores were drawn from the LL group and 40 from the LW group.

Across acculturational categories, within the LL group, 20.2% (16) of Latino participants fell in the “more Latino” category, 14.0% (11) fell in the “more non-Latino” category, and 65.8% (52) fell in the “bicultural” category. Within the LW group, 2.5% (1) of Latino partners scored in the “more Latino” range, 17.5% (7) could be classified as “more-non-Latino,” and 80.0% (32) could be classified as “bicultural.” Clearly, the overwhelming majority of Latino participants in both the LL and LW groups could be characterized as “bicultural,” with 70.6% (84) of the total number of Latinos (119) in the sample being placed in this category. Table 8 presents a break down of the Latino participants according to acculturational category by gender and couple group based on individual BAS scores.

An ANOVA was performed comparing husbands and wives in the LW group by acculturational category regarding Positive Agreement Scores (PCA's) on Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Marital Satisfaction. There was no significant effect for acculturational category on relationship dimensions either for husbands or wives. It is worth noting, however, that only one Latino participant from the LW couple group was categorized as “more Latino,” which suggests that this may not have been a fair comparison. Nevertheless, in the LL couple group, which showed a more equitable distribution of acculturational categories, the pattern was the same, with no differences emerging on marital dimensions across acculturational categories. Even when data from

both LL and LW groups were combined, there were no significant differences either for males or females on any of the dependent variables.

To complement the above analyses and better understand the impact of acculturation on marital dynamics, the researcher utilized multiple linear regression to explore whether acculturation scores could predict either couple or individual scores on these marital dimensions. The analyses were conducted for LW and LL couples separately. Because each Latino(a) individual had a set of two scores on the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS) (one for “Hispanic”/Latino domain and the other for “non-Hispanic”/ non-Latino domain), for each multiple regression these two scores were used as the independent, or predictor, variables while Conflict Resolution PCA, Communication PCA, and Marital Satisfaction PCA were used as dependent, or criterion, variables. Analyses were performed separately for males and females. In both couple groups, husbands' and wives' acculturation (BAS) scores, whether jointly or separately, failed to predict either couple or individual scores on Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Marital Satisfaction. Another set of regression analyses was performed using the same procedure to predict other relationship dimension scores (e.g., Financial Management, Sexual Relationship) from BAS scores. Again, acculturation scores failed to predict DV scores.

Table 8

*Acculturational Categories for Latino Participants by Gender and Couple Group*

<i>Acculturational Category</i>	<i>Group</i>		<i>Totals</i>
	Latino-Latino	Latino-White	All Latinos (by gender)
<b>Males</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 13)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>(n = 53)<sup>b</sup></b>
More Latino	17.5% (7)	0.0% (0)	13.2% (7)
More Non-Latino	15.0% (6)	23.1% (3)	17.0% (9)
Bicultural	67.5% (27)	76.9% (10)	69.8% (37)
Total	100.0% (40)	100.0% (13)	100.0% (53)
.....			
<b>Females</b>	<b>(n = 39, 1 missing)</b>	<b>(n = 27)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>(n = 65)<sup>b</sup></b>
More Latina	22.5% (9)	3.7% (1)	15.2% (10)
More Non-Latina	12.5% (5)	14.8% (4)	13.6% (9)
Bicultural	62.5% (25)	81.5% (22)	71.2% (47)
Total	100.0% (39)	100.0% (27)	100.0% (66)
.....			
<b>All Latinos (by acculturational category)</b>	<b>(n = 79, 1 missing)</b>	<b>(n = 40)</b>	<b>(n = 119)</b>
More Latino	20.2% (16)	2.5% (1)	14.3% (17)
More non-Latino	14.0% (11)	17.5% (7)	15.1% (18)
Bicultural	65.8% (52)	80.0% (32)	70.6% (84)
Grand Totals	100.0% (79)	100.0% (40)	100.0% (119)

Note. a = In the LW group there were 14 Latino males and 26 Latina females who completed the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale (BAS). The rest of the partners were White and were not required to complete the BAS. Hence, they are excluded from this table.

b = Across couple groups, there were 54 total Latino males and 65 Latina females.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The author has several aims for this last chapter. The first one is to interpret and discuss the implications of the study's findings in the context of previous literature pertaining to intercultural couples. To facilitate this, the chapter is divided into sections that correspond to several areas of investigation presented in the introductory chapter and in the literature review. A second purpose is to re-evaluate the methodology of the study after having carried it out, which involves commenting on the research process itself, including which factors facilitated and which hindered the successful and timely completion of the project. Thirdly, the investigator wishes to make recommendations for future research with intercultural couples based both on the study's results and on her experience of carrying out this project. A final goal is to discuss the clinical implications of the findings.

### Characteristics of People Who Intermarry

The first set of statistical analyses was done to explore any differences among White-White, Latino-Latino, and Latino-White couples with regard to age, education, income, employment status, occupational category, length of marriage, number of children, number of years of acquaintance prior to marriage, and religious orientation. Significant differences among the three groups emerged for husbands' education, wives'

education, couple income, number of children, and number of years partners knew each other prior to marrying.

For husbands' education, men in intercultural (LW) relationships were significantly better educated than men in Latino monocultural marriages, and about as educated as males in White monocultural marriages. Husbands in WW unions also had a significant educational advantage relative to LL husbands. Compared to husbands in WW and LW couples, a smaller proportion of Latino males marrying monoculturally were college educated, and the intercultural couple group had the highest proportion of college-educated males (see Table 2).

White wives marrying monoculturally were significantly better educated than Latinas marrying monoculturally. Indeed, the White monocultural group had the highest proportion of college-educated women (67.5%), followed by the LW group (40%) (see Table 2). Still, the educational difference discovered between husbands in LW and LL relationships was not found for their wives. The finding that White women marrying monoculturally were better educated than their Latina counterparts suggests that the former may place greater emphasis on educational attainment and/or that they may possess greater resources to pursue a higher level of education.

Thus, in general, it would appear that intercultural couples in the current sample were better educated than Latino monocultural couples. Comparing the proportion of college-educated males and females across groups, as well as the occupational distribution, and considering that only 32.5% of males in intercultural marriages were Latino, one might conjecture that the educational difference between LW and LL marriages may be accounted for by the influence of college-educated White males in the LW group.

Regarding income, WW couples reported significantly more income than their LL counterparts, but had about the same earnings as LW couples. Similarly, intercultural LW marriages declared significantly more income than monocultural Latino marriages. A greater proportion of wives in LL marriages (77.5%) were identified as working outside of the home compared to wives in WW (60%) and LW (65%) marriages, but this difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, LL female partners appeared to be relatively highly represented in the “clerical/sales/technical” and “other” employment categories compared to females in WW and LW marriages, but there was no statistically significant difference uncovered along this variable.

The above findings on employment and occupation, in combination with the income distribution and disparate levels of education among the couple groups, suggest that LL women may be working outside the home more often, possibly in less prestigious jobs than their WW and LW counterparts, because they may need to do so in order to elevate the family income to sustainable levels. This may not be the case as much for WW and LW women, a higher proportion of whom declared their occupation to be “homemaker,” and who may have the opportunity to stay at home caring for their children because of a higher family income.

Regarding number of children, WW couples had a significantly greater number of children than LL couples. This difference may be due to WW couples possessing a greater level of income which may help them to afford the costs associated with bearing more children than couples in LL marriages. However, since the income levels for WW and LW couples were very similar, and there was no difference in number of children between LW and LL couples, this explanation, by itself, does not seem very likely. An alternative or additional explanation may be offered by another finding, which will be



discussed later in this chapter. Specifically, WW couples reported a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the role of religion in their marriage when compared to LL and LW unions. For WW unions, this may translate into more traditional views regarding reproduction, which, combined with greater financial means, may account for more children in these relationships. In addition, since most of the WW couples came from the Mid-Western region of the United States, it is possible that they hold more traditional values regarding family planning than do inhabitants of other parts of the country.

There is currently no literature that might help explain why Latino-Latino couples had a significantly longer period of acquaintance prior to marriage than WW and LW marriages. It is possible, however, that Latino partners in LL marriages may have begun dating at a younger age than their WW and LW counterparts, thus resulting in a longer period of acquaintance and/or courtship. This hypothesis seems to be partly supported by the fact that LL partners were, on average, younger and had been married less time than partners in the other two groups (both were statistically non-significant differences, though). Larson and Holman (1994) concluded from previous research that the quality of a marriage is positively correlated with the length of partners' acquaintance. If one assumes this to be true, then one would expect the LL couple group to show significantly greater satisfaction and less distress than WW and LW couples along various marital dimensions. This was not the case, however.

In summary, while it is possible that the between-group differences on education, income, number of children, and years of acquaintance prior to marriage were the result of sampling errors, the results from this study in terms of the characteristics of people who intermarry support previous findings that couples who marry interculturally tend to be better educated and have a higher income than those who do not (Chan & Wethington,

1998; Qian, 1999; Sung, 1990). In addition, while this has not been demonstrated, it seems from the current sample that it is the males who most contribute to this group difference. Further, it seems clear that, at least in this sample, LW couples only have educational and income advantages relative to LL couples, but not relative to WW couples. This is not surprising, given the well-known advantage that Caucasians, as a group, have compared to minority groups in these dimensions. Further, the status similarity between LW and WW couples may be due to the influence (higher education and/or income) of the White partner. Future research might explore how these patterns change in intercultural couples where Latino partners marry members of other racial/ethnic minority groups.

Qian (1999) used a formula to calculate rates at which people of White, African American, Asian, and Latino backgrounds marry Whites. He discovered that for Latinos the percentage of racially endogamous (same race/ethnicity) unions was significantly lower as educational attainment increased; that is, Latinos who marry Whites tend to be better educated than those who marry other Latinos. Still, Qian (1999) noted, Latinos in LW marriages tend to marry Whites whose educational attainment is greater than their own. He added that White men and women who are college graduates are less likely to marry Latino partners than are those with less education.

Thus, the findings in this study partly support those of Qian (1999) in that White women in monocultural relationships showed greater educational attainment than women in LL relationships. However, on the basis of Qian's findings that White males and females with higher educational attainment are more likely to be in endogamous (WW) marriages than in intercultural (LW) marriages, one might have expected the educational levels of husbands and wives in WW and LW marriages to differ significantly, yet they did not. Nevertheless, it was the case here that men who married interculturally were better

educated than those in Latino monocultural matches, though the same difference was not present among wives in these types of couples.

In general, Qian (1999) discovered that Latino and Asian natives of the U.S. marry outside of their ethnic/racial group at a significantly higher rate than their immigrant counterparts, who tend to marry people from their own group. For African Americans and Whites the opposite pattern was uncovered; that is, immigrants marry outside of their ethnic/racial group more often than do natives. In addition, Latinos living in the Midwest (e.g., Missouri), says Qian, have the highest odds of being married to Whites because that region of the country has the smallest proportion of resident Latinos compared to other regions of the U.S.

The current study's results also showed that WW couples reported significantly more income than LL couples, but had about the same earnings as LW couples. Similarly, LW partners declared significantly more income than LL marriages. This finding supports a pattern uncovered by Sung (1990), who studied intermarriage among Chinese-Americans and documented that Chinese who intermarried had better jobs and higher incomes than those who did not. She also reported that intermarriage rates among Chinese-Americans increased with more generations of living in the United States and that those who intermarried were better educated than those who married other Chinese-Americans. Again, these findings are consistent with the results of this study.

### Marital Adjustment

This project was intended to address the following questions: Do Latino-White couples have more difficulty communicating and resolving conflicts than do Latino-Latino or White-White couples? Do Latino-White intercultural couples experience less marital

satisfaction than Latino-Latino and White-White couples? Do Latino-White couples differ from Latino-Latino and White-White couples regarding areas of conflict? 4) Do Latino-White couples with less-acculturated Latino partners have more difficulty in communicating and resolving conflicts and/or experience less marital satisfaction than couples in which the Latino partner is more fully acculturated? Each of these questions is designed to explore certain key aspects of the marital functioning/ adjustment of White-White, Latino-Latino, and Latino-White couples. The conclusions from the study are presented in the following pages using these questions as a guide.

Communication and conflict-resolution are seen by this researcher as core processes, which, if successfully implemented, can help the couple to resolve differences in any other relationship areas. Given the theoretical and research literature presented in the literature review with regard to the relationships among marital adjustment (Sabatelli, 1998; Wilson, Larson, McCulloch, & Stone, 1997), marital satisfaction (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau 1997; Feeney, Noller & Ward, 1997), communication (Burleston & Denton, 1997; Christensen & Shenk, 1991), and conflict resolution (Clements et al., 1997; Epstein, Baucom, & Rankin, 1993), it was this author's contention that the variables of communication and conflict-management would contribute to marital satisfaction substantially, and that examining these processes more closely in Latino-White intercultural couples might help to identify key ingredients promoting or thwarting marital adjustment and satisfaction in these marriages. Such information could then be implemented in future research and in clinical practice. Implications for clinical work and research are discussed at the end of this chapter.

As noted in the literature review, because the phases of conflict involve everything from the causes of conflict (Storaasli & Markman, 1990) to its aftermath (Gottman &

Levenson, 1999), one might expect that partners from different cultures might approach the process differently, which may lead to increased distress in Latino-White marriages. However, WW, LL, and LW couples in this sample presented no significant differences regarding conflict resolution and communication processes. This suggests that couples' assessments of their abilities to communicate effectively, and their assessments of the existence and handling of conflict in the marital relationship, as well as their levels of satisfaction with the ways in which conflicts are handled in their marriage may not necessarily be a function of cultural homogeneity or diversity in a marriage. This finding runs contrary to earlier literature on the subject of intercultural relationships (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Fontaine & Dorch, 1980; Negy & Snyder, 1997). However, because the couple groups were not equivalent on key demographic criteria, the lack of difference on conflict resolution and communication must be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, at least one study supports the present findings on these marital dimensions (Negy & Snyder, 2000).

With regard to the second research question above, there were no significant differences among the couple groups on marital satisfaction, which suggests that LW intercultural couples may be just as satisfied with their marriages as monocultural couples. Again, this finding does not substantiate theories proposed by other authors (Durodoye, 1994), but it must be interpreted with caution because of the potential confounds discussed previously (i.e., between-group differences on education, income, number of children, and years of acquaintance prior to marriage, the influence of which could not be removed).

In the same vein, it is worth noting that, in their study comparing interethnic White-Mexican American couples to monoethnic White and monoethnic Mexican American couples on various marital dimensions, Negy and Snyder (2000) found no difference in

overall levels of relationship satisfaction among the three groups. It must be mentioned, however, that Nagy and Snyder (2000) used ANCOVA to partial out the effects of age, length of marriage, and years of education prior to making their conclusions. As noted earlier, that option was not available in this study because conditions were not appropriate for ANCOVA. Of course, further research is needed with various combinations of intercultural marriages to examine possible differences in marital functioning.

To answer the third research question, WW, LL, and LW couples were compared along several marital dimensions which have been suggested in the literature as potential areas of conflict in intercultural marriages, including, but not limited to, personality issues, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, gender roles, and spiritual beliefs. The above areas have been repeatedly identified in the literature as areas of conflict with which couples, in general, and intercultural couples, especially, must struggle.

According to Larson and Holman (1994), personality traits may predispose a partner to distort relationship events or to overreact to negative relationship events. Kelly and Conley (1987) performed a longitudinal study spanning over forty years (1930s to 1980) in which they examined the role of personality and social variables (i.e., attitudes, aspects of early social development, and sexual history) on marital satisfaction and stability (staying married versus separating or divorcing). Personality was measured by way of a self-report measure, and personality ratings were provided by participants' acquaintances. Compatibility was conceptualized and measured as a composite of marital-satisfaction scores and marital-stability outcome (whether the couple was still married at follow-up or not). The researchers reported that personality traits were the principal predictor of marital compatibility.

Because personality is partly shaped by the cultural context of each individual, one might expect partners in Latino-White marriages to report higher levels of dissatisfaction with the partner's personality traits (as assessed by the ENRICH, these include temper, moodiness, stubbornness, jealousy, possessiveness, public demonstrations of affection, and smoking/drinking habits), particularly if they use causal attributions (a view of partner traits as the source of marital problems) during conflict-resolution interactions, as described by Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin (1993). In the current study there were no between-group differences in the levels of partner satisfaction with and adjustment to the partner's behavior and personality traits, so it may be that personality differences are manifested in similar ways regardless of whether the marriage is monocultural or intercultural.

Financial management has also been identified as a particularly challenging area for intercultural couples to negotiate (Bowman, 1990; Storaasli & Markman, 1990). This study's results revealed no significant differences in the way in which WW, LL, and LW couples handle finances. It is interesting to note that this held true across income levels, which varied significantly as a function of couple group.

Time spent together, which in this study was labeled "Leisure Activities," was one of the couple interactional processes addressed in this study. This subscale measured the couples' preferences for spending leisure time, including personal versus social activities, shared versus individual preferences, and partners' expectations as to how leisure time should be spent. Latino-White couples were expected to report lower levels of consensus and more dissatisfaction with the use of leisure time than Latino-Latino and White-White couples because of culturally-based differences. Specifically, Latinos are thought to have a collectivistic orientation, which may often involve the seeking out of joint activities or

family activities whereas Whites are thought to have an individualistic orientation, which may translate into a stronger preference for individual activities and interests (Triandis, 1994). Such a difference was not borne out among the three groups, again suggesting that satisfaction or dissatisfaction with time spent together is not an issue particular to LW matches.

Another interactional variable examined here was the sexual relationship of the couples. Specifically, the couples were compared on their feelings and concerns about their sexual and affectional relationships, including satisfaction with the expression of affection, level of comfort discussing sexual issues, and partners' attitudes toward sex, birth control and fidelity. Because of presumed culturally based differences between Latinos and Whites regarding attitudes towards sexuality and sexual practices, Latino-White marriage partners were expected to report more discrepancy in their notions of the role of sex in the relationship, more dissatisfaction with levels of affection in the relationship, and/or greater disagreement on birth-control decisions as compared to Latino-Latino and White-White couples. Again, no difference was found among the three groups of marriages.

It might be argued that because most of the Latino participants, including those in LW marriages, can be characterized as "bicultural" (based on BAS scores), their attitudes about sexuality may be more similar to, than different from, their partners' views. However, the fact that acculturation was not found to have a significant impact on any marital dimensions, despite previous research findings (Negy & Snyder, 1997; 2000), suggests that it may be necessary to evaluate the impact of acculturation further to understand its role in marital adjustment.



Childrearing has been one of the most frequently documented areas of conflict for couples in general (Bowman, 1990; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001) and for intercultural couples in particular (Chan & Wethington, 1998; Kiev, 1973; Mann & Waldron, 1977; Negy & Snyder, 2000). The area of childrearing can be expected to be especially crucial to marital satisfaction in Latino-White couples because culturally-based differences in values and childrearing practices may add complexity and stress to an already stressful marital and family experience, parenting. Results from this study, however, did not reflect a higher rate of conflict for LW couples compared to their WW and LL counterparts in this area. Again, it may be that this area is not a special challenge to mixed couples, or that other variables or aspects of acculturation are at play here.

Family and friend relationships constitute two of the "current-context" variables described by Larson and Holman (1994) and one that was examined in this study. Latino-White, Latino-Latino and White-White marriages were compared regarding their concerns and feelings about their relationship with relatives, in-laws, and friends. In Latino-White marriages, a higher degree of distress might be expected because of either partner's family and/or friends not accepting the intercultural relationship (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Chan & Wethington, 1998). Contrary to expectations, this was not the case. This finding contradicts that of Fontaine and Dorch (1980), who declared that interethnic couples reported more external problems (e.g., problems with community, friends, and family) than intraethnic couples. The lack of difference here might suggest that intercultural unions may not face as much opposition as they once did, or that LW unions may be viewed more positively than other types of intercultural unions (e.g. Black-White).

Lamke (1989) and Larson and Holman (1994) supported the importance of similarity of gender roles as well as noted that marital adjustment is higher when both partners express nurturance, caring, and affection (expressiveness). They further stated that partners sharing similar values, beliefs, and attitudes contributes to marital satisfaction and stability. Bearing this in mind, one would expect that gender roles might prove a major area of disagreement for Latino-White couples, given many Latino partners' acceptance of traditional gender roles, particularly by those who are less acculturated (Vasquez, 1994). Contrary to this expectation, however, there was no significant difference among the three couple groups regarding their agreement about gender roles. That is, partners in each type of marriage seemed to be equally comfortable with the marital and family role attitudes and behaviors that characterize their respective marriages.

It is possible that partners choose to marry each other partly based on similar or complementary gender role expectations, regardless of cultural similarities or differences. Again, further study is needed in this area, particularly with regard to the impact of acculturation on gender roles, in order to draw further conclusions. Doing this with individual, rather than strictly with couple measures, is likely to be the most effective approach when it comes to examining gender roles.

Religion and spirituality have been named as a potential area of conflict for intercultural couples (Ho, 1990; McGoldrick & Garcia Preto, 1984) since these unions may not only be interracial and/or interethnic, but also interreligious, in nature. Based on divergent religious traditions and spiritual values, partners in LW relationships might be expected to experience more conflict in this arena than WW and LL marriages. In this study, WW couples reported significantly less difficulties and more satisfaction with the role of religion/spirituality in their marriage than did LL and LW couples. This pattern

suggests that the literature may be correct in proposing religion/ spirituality as an area of conflict for intercultural couples, apparently due to different religious orientations among husbands and wives. However, this finding is obscured by the fact that Latino monocultural couples also reported more difficulty than White monocultural couples in this area. Perhaps the fact that many WW couples were recruited together from their church resulted in an over-representation of couples who share the same faith whereas couples recruited through other sources may represent greater variability in religious orientations.

There were no statistically significant differences across couple groups with regard to husbands and wives' religious orientation (e.g., Catholic, Protestant). However, it was found that in the WW group, but not in the LL or LW groups, wives' religious orientation, both in isolation and in combination with their husbands' religious orientation, had a significant effect on Spiritual Beliefs couple scores. This suggests in the WW group there was a closer relationship between husbands' and wives' religions than is present in the other two couple groups. In other words, while partners in WW monocultural marriages reported having highly similar religious faiths, husbands and wives in LL and LW marriages endorsed different religious denominations. These results also suggest that wives' religiosity may be stronger than husbands' religiosity in determining the role of spirituality in a couple's marital life.

### The Impact of Acculturation

From the above results it appears that, generally, the same marital dynamics that operate in monocultural couples are also present in LW intercultural relationships. However, the narrow range of acculturation scores among Latino participants in the

sample may account, at least partially, for some of the results with regard to the marital dimensions on which the couple groups were compared. Indeed, one might expect that the degree to which a Latino partner in an intercultural union with a White partner is able to develop a bicultural identity (which would in turn allow him or her to function competently in both cultural spheres) would help account for how well the couple communicate, resolve conflicts, and how satisfied they are with their marriage.

It has been discovered, however, that the relationship between acculturation and marital functioning, which is only now beginning to be understood, is more complicated than one might think. For example, in their study with Mexican American couples, Negy and Snyder (1997) reported that a higher rate of acculturation was modestly associated with higher levels of marital distress for Mexican American wives, but was unrelated to husbands' marital satisfaction. They conjectured that the role of acculturation in marital relationships may depend on factors such as partners' expectations, acculturation levels in partners' families, and the immediate social context. They further hypothesized that higher acculturation may require renegotiation of marital roles, which may initially lead to wives experiencing greater marital role strain than their husbands.

In their 2000 study, Negy and Snyder found that for interethnic couples in which the wife was Mexican-American and the husband was White, the wives' levels of acculturation (as measured by Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-ARSMA) were positively correlated to their levels of satisfaction with gender roles and their satisfaction with their children, as well as to their husbands' dissatisfaction with children, their rates of conflict over child rearing, and satisfaction with financial management strategies. In couples where the husband was Mexican-American, acculturation did not relate significantly to any relationship dimensions (e.g., child rearing,

gender roles). The investigators did not indicate whether the ARSMA was administered in English or Spanish, but they pointed out that speaking and reading English were part of the study's participation criteria. Yet, despite the possible narrowing of acculturation range that this criterion was likely to produce, a significant effect still emerged for wives' acculturation levels.

Given the importance that has been accorded to acculturation in recent literature, acculturation was examined in this study in the context of Latino-White and Latino-Latino marriages, specifically to assess its relationship to marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict resolution processes in these couples. It was discovered that, for LL and LW couples, there were no significant differences on marital dimensions based on acculturational categories. In addition, acculturation had no significant value in predicting any of the individual or couple scores on the marital dimensions of the ENRICH, either for LL or LW couples. This contradicts previous findings regarding the relationship of acculturation to couple dynamics (Negy & Snyder, 1997; 2000). Part of the reason for this may be the present researcher's failure to partial out the influence of demographic confounds, which may or may not have interacted with acculturation scores. In addition, the fact that only English-speaking respondents were recruited may have limited the range of acculturation represented in the sample to the point of lessening or negating the impact of acculturation on the relationship variables.

An alternative explanation may lie with the nature of the instrument used to measure acculturation in this study, the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). Unlike the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA), which measures the extent to which respondents have characteristics of and exposure to White United States culture (Negy & Snyder, 2000), the BAS relies primarily on the respondent's

language use/ preference to assess acculturation (Marin & Gamba, 1996). This criterion may be too restrictive and obscure other important aspects of acculturation, thereby over-inflating the respondent's level of adherence to mainstream U.S. society. Other important aspects of acculturation that may be important to measure in future studies are, for example, adherence to festivities and/or rituals from the original culture, familiarity with the host culture, and generation in the United States.

In summary, based on the results of this study, it appears that, contrary to most theoretical literature in this area, intercultural couples may not necessarily face more problems in marital relationships than monocultural couples. There are several possible explanations for these findings. One is that acculturation may interact with several marital dimensions in complex ways which are not yet understood. Another explanation may be that, regardless of culture, partners choose each other on the basis of various factors, such as similar interests, similar viewpoints, and/or complementary dynamics, and that such variables create a level of compatibility that supersedes cultural differences. In this manner, cultural differences that may be expected to occur between random individuals may not be evident in self-selected couple units.

A last alternative is that Latino-White couples experience cultural differences but choose to minimize them in order to uphold a more pleasant view themselves (i.e. "we are like any other couple"), thus experiencing relatively low levels of conflict. This explanation would be consistent with the developmental stages of intercultural marriage that Soncini (1997) referred to as "pre-marital/ fusion stage" (the couple maximize their similarities and minimize their differences), and "honeymoon stage" (the couple become more aware of differences but view them as advantages rather than as sources of conflict). In addition, the impact of acculturation on an intercultural relationship may become more

or less evident depending on the form of intercultural adjustment in which the couple chooses to engage, which may, in turn, affect a couple's marital adjustment. Tseng (1977) discussed five such patterns which range from "one-way adjustment" (one partner completely adopts the cultural patterns of the other) to "creative adjustment" (each partner gives up certain aspects of his/her culture and both develop a new culture of their own).

A note of caution is in order regarding the study's results. Namely, because the impact of several confounding variables could not be ruled out, the results must be interpreted with caution and only in the context of more extensive research findings in this area, which are largely unavailable at this time. Nevertheless, the findings provide a starting point from which future investigators can generate hypotheses for further study. Suggestions for further research are offered later in this chapter.

### Clinical Implications

Answers to research questions such as the ones explored through this study are likely to be valuable to marriage and family therapists, given the significant increase in the Latino population in the U.S. and the concomitant rise in Latino-White intermarriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). One clinical implication from the results of this study is that LW intercultural couples have at least the same potential as other types of marriages for functioning well and for being fulfilled in their relationships. Further, the results show that LW couples are not necessarily overburdened with conflict as compared to WW and LL monocultural couples.

These findings should give clinicians, and the community at large, reason to be hopeful about the future of mixed marriages, and contribute to less pathologizing of these unions. In addition, the results imply that marital therapists must pay close attention to the

unique issues presented by mixed couples, and not necessarily assume that the problems are the product of cultural differences. In fairness, however, much more research is needed in this area in order to lend further credibility to these findings, especially considering the challenges that were posed to internal validity in this study (i.e., between-group differences on education, income, females' occupation, number of children, and years of acquaintance prior to marriage, the influence of which could not be removed).

Still, clinicians must be prepared to explore the role of cultural differences, and similarities, in each intercultural relationship. Knowledge of the dynamics of intercultural marriages, including communication and conflict-resolution processes, and factors that contribute to the long-term success in these marriages, can help practitioners to develop therapeutic approaches/ interventions to reduce conflict and enrich the marriage. In addition, it is relevant for practitioners to pay attention to the developmental stage of the couple and to the ways in which they negotiate cultural differences in order to more effectively assess potential problems related to intercultural issues and intervene appropriately. Finally, clinicians may benefit clients to a greater extent by paying attention to the type of intermarriage combination a couple represents, since some may be stigmatized more than others and this can affect relationship dynamics as well. One can easily see how all of these kinds of knowledge may become especially relevant for use in pre-marital counseling with intercultural partners.

Several authors have contributed guidelines that can assist marital therapists working with intercultural couples. For example, Rohrlach (1988) recommended that each partner be aware of the other's culture and the extent to which the partner is attached to and is a product of his or her culture; that there be full awareness and discussion of cultural differences rather than minimization or ignorance of them; that partners use a common



language to help facilitate communication; and that partners continue to communicate about their cultural differences as long as the marriage lasts.

For their part, McGoldrick and Garcia Preto (1984) postulated that factors such as the degree of value discrepancy or similarity among the partners, different degrees of acculturation, religious differences, racial differences, the gender of the spouse from each background, socioeconomic differences, familiarity of the partners with the other's culture prior to marriage, and the degree to which emotional conflicts within the family of origin have been resolved by each partner, can play a role in the marital adjustment of intercultural couples. Soncini (1997) added to this list liking of the spouse's culture, having realistic expectations of cultural differences (i.e., expecting that there will be conflicts and misunderstandings), high self-esteem and self-worth (in each partner), a long-lasting spirit of adventure, a sense of humor, and support from family, friends and society. Clearly, future research with intercultural couples would help to develop further guidelines and to assess the effectiveness of using these guidelines in clinical practice.

### Recommendations for Future Research

One of the hopes of this researcher was that results from this study might lead to the formulation of theories pertaining to the dynamics of Latino-White couples, as well as provide additional grounds for future research with several types of intercultural couples. Below is a list of recommendations that may serve as a guide in this regard.

First, the utilization of a self-report inventory to assess important couple relationship dimensions was, of course, limited in that it only offered the participants' perceptions of their own relationships. Further, the high scores on Idealistic Distortion suggest that participants, especially men in the LL and LW groups, may have presented

their relationships in an overly positive light. It may be that participant couples self-selected to join the study because they are happier than most couples, which might explain the slight elevation of their Idealistic Distortion scores. Alternatively, the couples may have presented themselves in an overly positive manner in order not to be judged negatively by the researcher, whom they knew would be able to link their results with their personal information.

Moreover, based on the means on Idealistic Distortion, one might hypothesize that men in LL and LW marriages may find it especially challenging to admit to relationship problems. However, the fact that the ENRICH was normed on a largely Caucasian sample (Fowers, 1991) might partly account for these elevations. This hypothesis could be further assessed by conducting a re-standardization of the ENRICH which includes more Latino participants. In addition, including observational measures in future couple studies such as this one could supplement the information derived from self-report measures, thereby offering an additional perspective of the relationship and a more thorough understanding of the relationship dynamics.

Second, scores in each marital dimension are thought to summarize a variety of processes that impact each dimension. For example, the Conflict Resolution scale of the ENRICH assessed participants' attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the presence of conflict and the resolution of conflict in the relationship. Items included topics such as partners' openness to recognizing and resolving conflicts, the strategies used for problem-solving, and the partners' satisfaction with the manner in which conflicts are addressed. A qualitative research project inquiring into these specific target areas may shed more light into the conflict resolution processes of intercultural couples than a single score can offer. In the same manner, other aspects of intercultural marriages might be explored more in

depth by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including observational measures.

Third, because only English-speaking participants were included in the study (because the Spanish version of the ENRICH has not yet been validated), there may have been less variability with regard to the acculturation levels of Latino partners both in the LW group and in the LL group. This may have especially affected the Latino-White intercultural group, because varying acculturation levels have been shown to play a key role in the relationship dynamics of LL and LW couples (Negy & Snyder, 1997; 2000). Thus, it is important that future studies explore the role of acculturation more in depth by recruiting participants with a broader range of acculturation levels, by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, and by employing bilingual measures. Clearly, further research is also needed in order to develop statistically sound measures of marital functioning in Spanish and other languages.

Fourth, the current project was focused on the ethnic/cultural differences of the participant couples (based on the way in which the couples were grouped). Future research might be aimed at exploring the impact of racial, cross-national, socioeconomic, and religious differences on mixed-couple relationships. In addition, other prospective researchers might consider assessing the role of the acculturation of the White partner in Latino-White marriages. As noted by other authors (Qian, 1999; Sung, 1990), White partners who marry interculturally are likely to be foreign-born rather than born in the U.S., and are likely to be less educated than those who marry intraculturally. One could only speculate that level of acculturation to mainstream United States culture may have a role in mate selection among Caucasians. In addition, the degree of liking for the partner's culture has been identified as a key aspect contributing to the successful long-term

adjustment of intercultural couples (Soncini, 1997). Thus, it might be relevant for future studies with Latino-White marriages to explore the degree to which the White partners' liking for and engagement with their spouses' cultures may contribute to marital satisfaction and other marital dynamics.

Fifth, since the current research was limited to only one specific type of intercultural couple, Latino-White marriages, the findings from this study may not generalize to other types of intercultural couples since Latino-White couples may present unique relationship dynamics not operating in other types of intercultural marriages. Future investigators may explore marital dynamics in other intercultural relationship combinations. Further, within Latino-Latino and Latino-White marriages, several Latino cultures were represented, which posed a limitation to internal validity given the large degree of cultural variability that exists from one Latin American country to another. Thus, replication of the above findings in various geographical areas of the United States where different segments of the Latino population are represented (e.g., in the Northeast, Puerto Rican-Americans are widely represented, while in the West, Mexican-Americans are the most numerous group, and Cubans are concentrated in the Miami, FL metropolitan area) might lend further validity to the results.

In a similar vein, it was challenging for this researcher to recruit a demographically equivalent sample for this study. Such equivalency seems to have been achieved with the WW and LW groups, but not with the LL group. Because of the time pressures imposed by the very nature of a dissertation project, the researcher selected participants largely on the basis of convenience. As discussed earlier, this strategy posed significant challenges regarding the interpretability of the final results, particularly because the influence of several confounding variables could not be reduced. However, in this sample, between-

group differences on communication and conflict resolution approached statistical significance, suggesting that increasing the sample size, which would enhance statistical power, could lead to statistical significance in a future study.

Another alternative may be stratified sampling so as to ensure a greater degree of comparability across groups. One note of caution here is that recruiting with the aim of having equal sample representation on key demographic variables may create an artificial situation whereby the sample does not reflect the population of interest. For example, in this sample, education was found to be inextricably tied to couple group, with men and women in WW and LW groups having significantly more education than their LL counterparts. It seems logical to believe that this might be part of a larger dynamic present in the general population, given the social inequalities between Caucasians and ethnic minority individuals in the United States. Thus, it seems more appropriate to recruit participants from different demographic strata based on their group representation in the general population, rather than attempting to make their representation in the sample exactly equal across groups.

The general difficulty in identifying and recruiting potential participants was most evident in the Latino-Latino group. Even after the participants were recruited, it was very challenging to secure the return of research materials from participant LL and LW couples. This was likely because of a combination of factors, and it is not clear to what extent it may have been the result of the recruiting methods used to solicit participation from these two groups versus being caused primarily by cultural dynamics. Nevertheless, below are some possibilities that warrant consideration from other investigators intending to conduct studies in this field.

The first consideration is the geographical location targeted. The Latino population in the researcher's immediate community (Springfield, Missouri) makes up approximately 3% of the general population in that area. Further, this small Latino population is primarily made up of relatively poor, relatively uneducated and relatively recently arrived Mexican immigrants. Thus, the number of English-proficient Latinos who could complete the research materials was limited, and it was necessary to recruit participants through third parties in this and other areas of the country (e.g., Florida, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, California). This complicated both the initial recruitment of participants and the follow-up, as noted in Chapter III. Would-be investigators in this area may thus wish to take the demographics of the area where the research is to be conducted into consideration when pursuing research with Latino populations, giving preference to in-person recruiting.

Also, Latino-White couples are less abundant than monocultural couples and may thus be more difficult to find than Latino-Latino couples. While one might expect that intercultural marriages may be readily located in large urban areas, presumably because of tolerant inter-group attitudes and large populations, some authors have suggested that these couples may be more prominent in areas where the population ratio of various racial/ethnic groups is highly unequal (Char, 1977; Qian, 1999; Yamamoto, 1973). Such is the case of Springfield, Missouri.

One additional factor regarding the recruitment of LW couples is that their status as intercultural couples is not necessarily evident by last name, for example, nor necessarily by external appearance. Therefore, it seems to the present researcher that these couples are best recruited through word of mouth by persons who can identify them as intercultural.

Other intercultural couples have also been found by this researcher to be a good referral source for this type of marriage.

Another issue to consider is that, in the Latino-Latino group, several couples were unable to participate because they did not meet the study criterion of being legally married. Long-term, committed unions where the partners are not legally married are common in many Latino communities, in the researcher's experience. In the future, researchers might wish to seek out empirical support for this trend and take it into consideration when setting up criteria for participation in studies with Latino couples.

The disparate amount of time between the return of the WW packets and the LL and LW packets may be explained first by the fact that most WW couples received their research packets in person and the researcher personally collected many of them as well. It may also be due to Latinos' reputed relaxed attitude toward time as compared to Caucasians. One last factor may be that Latinos are not used to participating in research and may not see it as particularly important or relevant, and these participants may have viewed their involvement in the study more as a favor to the researcher than as something that could benefit them as a group. This may be especially true for individuals with less education, who would thus have less exposure to research as an enterprise.

A final recommendation for future researchers is to study the phenomenon of intermarriage longitudinally. This would greatly help enhance our understanding of intercultural unions, including how their functioning is affected at each stage of development by the couples' cultural differences, as well as how the couple handle these differences over time and what makes for a successful, long-term intercultural marriage.

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## Appendix A

### Letter to Schools/Organizations

### Letter to Schools/ Organizations

Address

Date

Dear Mr./ Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ :

My name is Raquel D. Muller. I am a fifth-year doctoral candidate in the Marriage and Family Program at Seton Hall University's Department of Education and Human Services. I am currently working on my dissertation research, which consists of a study of married couples. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship dynamics of three types of marriages: Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White. By relationship dynamics I mean variables such as levels of marital satisfaction, satisfaction with childrearing, and communication and conflict resolution processes. I am writing to you in an effort to obtain your help in recruiting participants for this study.

My intent is to contact the (parents' association at your school/ members of your organization) in order to send them information regarding the study. In this manner, (parents/ individuals) who meet the participation criteria and are interested in participating can contact me so that I can mail them the research materials. For your perusal, I have attached a copy of my solicitation flyer, which details the study's purpose and procedures, as well as the participation criteria.

Please call or e-mail me if you have any questions. I can be reached via phone at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or via e-mail at [xxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@shu.edu). If you prefer, you may contact my mentor, Dr. Sharon Davis Massey, who is the project supervisor. Her phone number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx and her e-mail is [xxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@shu.edu). If you are willing to allow me to recruit participants through your (school/organization), I ask that you kindly state this in writing on (school/ organization) letterhead. For your convenience, I have attached a suggested format for this letter, as well as a self-addressed envelope. So that I may reach your (school's parents' association/ membership), please choose the method you believe more suitable: you may share this information with them so that they may reach out to me, or you may contact me directly with the name and contact information of the appropriate person(s).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this letter and for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT  
Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix B

### Approval to Conduct Research Letter

## Approval to Conduct Research Letter

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT, doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University, has the permission of \_\_\_\_\_ to conduct  
(name of school/organization)  
research with (parents of our students/ members of our organization in relation to her  
dissertation topic, Relationship Dynamics in Latino-White Intercultural Marriages:  
A Three -Group Comparison.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal/ Authorized person)

### Appendix C

#### Letter to Recruit Latino-Latino and Latino-White Couples



## Letter to Recruit Latino-Latino and Latino-White Couples

Name  
Address

Dear Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Raquel Muller and I am Panamanian. I am also a doctoral candidate in the Department of Professional Psychology and Marriage and Family at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I am conducting a study with couples of all ages who have children together. This project is supervised by Dr. Sharon D. Massey, Ph.D., who is a professor at Seton Hall. During my search for participants in the Springfield area, where I now live, I met Mr./ Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, who was kind enough to refer you to me because he/she thought you might be interested in learning about my study. I am writing to invite you to participate.

The study is about the marital relationship of three groups of couples: 1) Latino-Latino, 2) Latino-White (one partner Latino, the other Caucasian- American), and 3) White-White. The study will help to identify important factors in these three groups of marriages, such as marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution skills, and possible areas of conflict. This information is important to increase scientific knowledge regarding the growing Latino population in the United States, especially intercultural, or mixed, couples, about whom so little has been published, in order to help design future programs and interventions to meet the needs of these special groups.

For your convenience, I have attached a copy of my flyer, which explains in more detail the eligibility criteria and procedures for the study. If you have any questions, or if you wish to participate, please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. In a few days, I will call you as a follow-up to find out if you would like to participate. In this manner, I can forward the research materials to you as soon as possible. Once completed, the materials need only be mailed back in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided. I thank you in advance for your cooperation and hope to count on you both.

Sincerely,

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S.  
Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix D

### Recruitment Flyer (English)

# STUDY OF MARRIED COUPLES

(Latino and White monocultural and  
intercultural couples needed for this research)  
*Participants must be able to read and understand written English*

## Purpose of the Study and Duration of Participation

This study will examine various relationship dimensions in Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White couples. Participation is expected to take between forty-five minutes and one hour per person.

## Benefits of Participating in the Study

Benefits include reflecting on your own marital relationship, contributing to the increase of scientific knowledge regarding marital couples, receiving a report of the study results on relationship patterns in the groups studied (if requested), and receiving information on strengthening marital relationships (given out following participation in the study).

## Criteria for Participation

- 1) Both partners in a couple must participate for data to be valid.
- 2) All participants must be legally married, heterosexual couples who have lived together for at least two years.
- 3) Couples must have at least one child together.
- 4) Participants must be either: a) Latino(a) and married to either another Latino(a) or to a White (non-Latino) partner OR b) White (non-Latino) and married to either another White (non-Latino) or to a Latino(a) partner.

"Latino(a)" refers either to a person born in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, or Venezuela) or to a person born in the United States whose parents were both born in a Latin American country and, if living in the U.S., immigrated after age 18. "White" refers to a Caucasian person of non-Latino origin who was born in the United States and whose parents were both born in the United States or immigrated to the U.S. prior to age 18 and who are of Western and/or Northern European descent (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, or Wales). For the purposes of this study, persons of Spanish or Portuguese descent are not included in either category.

- 5) Latino participants must be able to read and understand written English.

## Contact Information

This research is conducted by Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT, a doctoral candidate in the Marriage and Family Program at Seton Hall University's Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy. Couples interested in participating should e-mail [xxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@shu.edu) or telephone (xxx) xxx-xxxx, ext xxx and give an address to which the research packet (and later the material on strengthening marital relationships) can be sent.

## Project Approval

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subjects' privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at (973) 275-2974.

## Explanation of Procedures

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss. You and your spouse are asked to complete research packets containing a short and a marital inventory called ENRICH (Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness). In addition, Latino participants are asked to complete an acculturation measure called the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). Acculturation is the process whereby an individual from one culture gradually adapts to another culture. Because at present the s being used have been developed and standardized only in English, participants in this research must be able to read and understand written English well enough to select responses that best describe their own marital relationship. Both husband and wife must participate in the research and each must give one's own, independent responses in order for the research to be valid. Separate envelopes are provided, to ensure that the responses of husband and wife are kept separate.

Your responses to the questionnaires will remain anonymous to anyone other than the researcher and her assistant.

Participant records will be stored in a locked cabinet to maintain confidentiality.

You may request a report of the final study results upon completing the study. Results will be describe the three groups of participants. This study is not designed to give feedback to individual persons or to a couple. You may call the researcher anonymously with any questions or concerns about the study. You may also call the project supervisor, Dr. Sharon D. Massey, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or e-mail her at xxxxxx@shu.edu.

Appendix E  
Recruitment Flyer (Spanish)

# ESTUDIO DE PAREJAS CASADAS

Se buscan parejas de Latinos, Blancos, y  
Mixtas (Latino-Blanco) para este estudio

## Propósito del Estudio y Duración de Participación

Este estudio examinara varios aspectos de las relaciones matrimoniales en tres tipos de parejas: Latino-Latino, Latino-Blanco y Blanco-Blanco. Se espera que la participación de cada persona dure entre cuarenta y cinco minutos y una hora.

## Beneficios de su Participación

Los beneficios de participar en este estudio incluyen la oportunidad de reflexionar acerca de su relación matrimonial, la oportunidad de contribuir al incremento de conocimientos científicos concernientes a los matrimonios monoculturales (Latino-Latino) e interculturales (Latino-Blanco), la oportunidad de recibir su propia copia de los resultados del estudio (si lo solicita), y la oportunidad de recibir información gratuita acerca del enriquecimiento matrimonial (al completar y devolver los materiales).

## Criterios de Elegibilidad

1. Ambos esposos deben participar para considerar los datos validos.
2. Todos los participantes deben ser parejas legalmente casadas y heterosexuales que hayan convivido juntos por lo menos dos años.
3. Todas las parejas deben tener por lo menos un hijo juntos.
4. Cada participante debe ser: a) Latino(a) y cuyo esposo(a) es Latino(a) o Blanco(a) (no-Latino) O b) Blanco(a) (no-Latino) y cuyo esposo(a) es Blanco(a) o Latino(a)  
 "Latino(a)" se refiere a una persona nacida en un país Latinoamericano de habla Española (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Republica Dominicana, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, o Venezuela). Latino(a) también se refiere a una persona nacida en los Estados Unidos cuyos padres fueron ambos nacidos en un país Latinoamericano y, si viven en los Estados Unidos, inmigraron después de los 18 años.  
 "Blanco(a)" se refiere a una persona Caucásica que no es de origen Latino, quien nació en los Estados Unidos, y cuyos padres también nacieron en los Estados Unidos o inmigraron a dicho país antes de los 18 años, y quienes se originaron en el Norte u Occidente (Oeste) de Europa (Alemania, Austria, Bélgica, Dinamarca, Escocia, Finlandia, Francia, Gales, Holanda, Inglaterra, Irlanda, Italia, Luxemburgo, Noruega, Suecia, o Suiza). Las personas de España o Portugal no están incluidas en ninguna de las dos categorías.

1. Los participantes Latinos deben saber leer y entender el inglés escrito.

## Información de Contacto

**Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT, candidata de doctorado en el programa de Terapia Marital y Familiar en el Departamento de Psicología Profesional y Terapia Familiar de la Universidad Seton Hall,** conduce este proyecto de investigación como parte de su disertación. Las parejas interesadas en participar deben contactarla por e-mail a la siguiente dirección: [xxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@shu.edu) o al teléfono (xxx) xxx-xxxx, extensión xxxx y dejar la dirección a la cual el sobre con los materiales de investigación (y luego los materiales sobre el enriquecimiento matrimonial) puede ser enviados.

## Aprobación del Proyecto

Este proyecto ha sido evaluado y aprobado por el Comité Institucional de Evaluación para la Investigación con Sujetos Humanos de la Universidad Seton Hall (IRB). El IRB cree que los procedimientos empleados en este proyecto de investigación preservan adecuadamente la privacidad, el bienestar, las libertades civiles y derechos de los sujetos participantes. La directora del IRB puede ser localizada al (973) 275-2974.

## Explicación de los Procedimientos

Su participación es voluntaria. Usted puede retirar su participación en cualquier momento sin riesgo de penalidad.

Al participar en el estudio, se les pide a usted y a su pareja que llenen paquetes que incluyen un corto formulario demográfico y un cuestionario marital llamado ENRICH (Enriqueciendo y Nutriendo las Relaciones, la Comunicación, y la Felicidad). Los participantes Latinos deberán además llenar un cuestionario sobre la aculturación llamado BAS (Escala Bidimensional de Aculturación para Hispanos). La aculturación es el proceso mediante el cual una persona proveniente de una cultura gradualmente se adapta a otra cultura.

Debido a que los cuestionarios que se usarán para este estudio fueron desarrollados y aprobados en inglés, se requiere que los participantes en este estudio sepan leer y entender el inglés escrito lo suficientemente bien para poder seleccionar las respuestas que mejor describen su relación marital. Tanto el esposo como la esposa deben participar en el estudio puesto que deben dar respuestas individuales para que los resultados sean válidos. Se proveerán sobres separados para cada esposo como manera de asegurar que las respuestas del esposo y de la esposa se mantengan separadas.

Sus respuestas a los cuestionarios permanecerán anónimas excepto para la investigadora y su asistente.

Toda información personal de los participantes será guardada bajo llave para preservar su confidencialidad.

Usted puede pedir un reporte de los resultados del estudio luego de llenar y devolver sus materiales. Los resultados describirán a los tres grupos de participantes. El estudio no ofrece resultados individuales a ninguna persona o pareja. Si tiene preguntas puede contactar a la investigadora o a la supervisora del proyecto al teléfono (xxx) xxx-xxxx o a la dirección [xxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx@shu.edu).

## Appendix F

### Informed Consent Form (English)



## Informed Consent Form

**Please read this form carefully, then sign and return one of the copies along with your research packets in the return envelope provided. Keep the other copy for your own records.**

### **The Researcher**

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT, a doctoral candidate in the Marriage and Family Program at Seton Hall University's Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy, as part of her dissertation research, is conducting the study described below. This project is supervised by Sharon Davis Massey, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor at Seton Hall University.

### **Purpose of the Research**

This is a study of relationship dynamics in three types of marriages: Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White. The study will help identify key relationship factors such as levels of marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution processes, and possible areas of conflict. I invite you to participate. However, before you proceed to completing the materials, please take a moment to read this form carefully. It contains important information that you will need in order to give informed consent to participate in the study. Also, please be sure to read the criteria for participation in the study carefully. Participation is expected to take between forty-five minutes and one hour per person.

### **Explanation of Procedures**

You and your spouse are asked to complete the enclosed research packets containing a short questionnaire and a marital inventory called ENRICH (Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness). The ENRICH is presented in a multiple-choice format (from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) where the participant indicates levels of agreement with a series of statements regarding various aspects of the marital relationship. It includes items such as "My partner is a good listener," and "We have difficulty deciding how to manage our finances." In addition, Latino participants are asked to complete an acculturation measure called the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). Acculturation is the process whereby an individual from one culture gradually adapts to another culture. The questions are presented in a multiple-choice format (from 1 to 4). Sample questions include "How often do you speak English?" "How often do you speak Spanish?" "How well do you read English?" and "How often do you watch television programs in Spanish?" Because at present the questionnaires being used have been developed and standardized only in English, participants in this research must be able to read and understand written English well enough to select responses that best describe their own marital relationship.

Each research packet is coded with a number-letter combination and labeled either "husband" or "wife." Please complete the packet corresponding to you separately from your spouse to preserve the confidentiality of individual responses. Because only one ENRICH booklet will be included per couple, you and your spouse are asked to take turns using it. Please do not write on the ENRICH booklet, as it will be reused. Kindly note that if there is a Latino(a) partner in the marriage, s/he must also complete the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). After completing your research materials, you are asked to place your answer sheets in the small response envelope labeled "husband" or "wife" that accompanies your packet. After you complete and seal all of the materials, you are free to discuss your responses with your spouse.

All research materials must be completed fully in order for the data to be valid, so please take your time in responding. Also, both partners must respond, since the couple is the unit of analysis.

Once both research packets are completed and individually sealed, you are asked to mail them back together in the return envelope provided, which is already addressed and has the appropriate return postage. Please return all completed research materials, the ENRICH booklet, your signed informed consent form, and if you wish, the request for feedback on the results of the study (when it is completed), within two weeks of receipt.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not obligated to participate, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty or

loss. In the case of participants who are also clients at the mental health clinic where the researcher is employed as an intern/counselor it must be noted that the quality of care and/or services they receive will not be affected in any way by their participation in the study.

### **Anonymity**

Each of you will be provided with a small response envelope in which to put your answer sheets. You are asked not to place any identifying information on any of the research materials, including the return envelope. All research packets will be coded with a number-letter combination. Although these codes can be matched to the participants' identifying information by the researcher, the list of codes will be kept separate from the list of participant records, except when needed, as described below.

There are five reasons for matching codes to participants. First, since this is a couple study, it is important that all materials belonging to one couple be matched together for data analysis. Second, the codes are used to aid the researcher in grouping the data from the three kinds of couples participating in this study: Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White. Third, because data-collection will take place over several months, the codes will be used so that the researcher can better monitor the flow of research materials, that is, which packets have been sent out and which have been received. This helps to avoid the unnecessary loss of research materials and to ensure that each participant couple will receive the informational packet on strengthening marital relationships in a timely manner (mailed within two weeks after the return of their research packets). Fourth, packets of data collected from couples from the clinic where the researcher is doing her internship will be coded so that they can be managed (from recruitment through dissemination and retrieval of packets) by a colleague or research assistant at the clinic. Only this colleague/assistant will have the list of names that matches the codes for these participants. This data will be kept sealed and separate from other research data until the completion of the data for all 120 – 150 participant couples and any clinical work on the part of the researcher with a participant couple is accomplished. Fifth, some couples will request information regarding the outcome of the study. By matching codes with couple requests, these couples will be mailed a summary of the results of the study. After this point, the personal data (names, addresses) of all participants will be shredded.

Data gathered from the ENRICH will be sent to the inventory developers for computer scoring. However, since the inventories will contain no identifying information, the identity of the participants will remain unknown to the scorers. You may call the researcher anonymously with any questions or concerns about the study at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, ext. xxxx. If you prefer, you may call the project supervisor at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or e-mail her at [xxxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@shu.edu).

### **Confidentiality of Records**

All records will be stored in a locked file cabinet to prevent unauthorized access to participant data. Participants' personal records (i.e., address, phone, and e-mail address) will be shredded after all data for the study have been collected. Information of participants who have requested a summary of the results will be shredded after these summaries have all been sent. The research data will be kept for three years to allow for further analysis and/or comparison with the work of other researchers.

### **Limits of Confidentiality**

Access to participant identifying information and to the research data will be limited to the principal researcher, the research assistant, and the project supervisor. All persons involved in the research team are obliged to maintain the confidentiality of participant records.

### **Risk Assessment**

The inventories used in this study have been used in published research with no reported adverse effects on the persons responding to them. However, if after completing the inventories you experience concerns regarding your marital relationship, or wish to enhance an already satisfying relationship, you may wish to discuss these concerns with a person trained in marital counseling. Persons with physical vulnerabilities such as pregnancy and other health-related concerns, if experiencing a heightened level of physical discomfort in response to taking the inventories, are advised to contact a physician. If you have concerns regarding the study itself, please address these to the researcher or the project supervisor.

### Benefits from the Study

Results from this study are expected to yield information about patterns of relationship functioning within three groups of marriages (Latino-Latino, Latino-White, and White-White). Because it focuses on marital dynamics within groups, the study will not provide results for individual couples. Nonetheless, participating in the study offers you and your mate the opportunity of reflecting on your own marital relationship as you answer the questions in standard inventories regarding marital relationships and acculturation. You also have the opportunity to contribute to the increase of scientific knowledge regarding contemporary monocultural and intercultural marriages. In addition, you may obtain a copy of the final research results, at your request. In appreciation for your participation in the study, after you complete and return all research materials, you will receive a free informational packet on strengthening marital relationships. Intercultural Latino-White couples will additionally receive some material tailored to that type of marriage.

### Informed Consent

To indicate your consent to participate, after reading this consent form thoroughly, please sign it to indicate that you have read and understood the information and consent to be a participant and return it in the envelope along with your completed research materials. Please keep the other copy of the form for your personal records. You may withdraw from the research at any point without penalty.

### Criteria for Participation

1. This is a couple study only. Both partners must agree to participate for data to be valid.
2. All participants must be legally married, heterosexual couples who have lived together for at least two years.
3. Couples must have at least one child together.
4. Participants must be:
  - a. Latino(a) and married to either another Latino(a) or to a White (non-Latino) partner
  - OR
  - b. White (non-Latino) and married to either another White (non-Latino) or to a Latino(a) partner.

"Latino(a)" refers either to a person born in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country (i.e. one of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, or Venezuela) or to a person born in the United States whose parents were both born in a Latin American country and, if living in the U.S., immigrated to the U.S. after age 18. Persons of pure Spanish descent (i.e. from Spain) are not included in this category.

"White" refers to a Caucasian person of non-Latino origin who was born in the United States and whose parents were both born in the United States or immigrated to the U.S. prior to age 18 and who are of Western and/or Northern European descent (i.e., from one or more of the following countries/regions: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, or Wales). Persons of Spanish or Portuguese descent are not included in this category.

5. Latino participants must be able to read and understand written English.

### Contact Information

Should you have any questions or concerns about the research or about participants' rights, you may contact the researcher anonymously at the following address, phone number and e-mail address:

Raquel Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT  
 Forest Institute Clinic  
 1322 S. Campbell  
 Springfield, MO 65807  
 (xxx) xxx-xxxx, ext. xxxx  
 xxxxxxxx@shu.edu

You may also contact the project supervisor:  
 Dr. Sharon Massey, Ph.D.  
 Seton Hall University  
 Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy  
 400 S. Orange Avenue  
 South Orange, NJ 07079  
 (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
[xxxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@shu.edu)

### **Project Approval**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subjects' privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at (973) 275-2974.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this research.

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT  
 Doctoral Candidate, Seton Hall University

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information above, and any questions I asked have  
 (print husband's name)  
 been answered to my satisfaction. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate  
 in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (husband's signature)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information above, and any questions I asked have  
 (print wife's name)  
 been answered to my satisfaction. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate  
 in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (wife's signature)

Appendix G  
Informed Consent Form (Spanish)

## **Consentimiento para Participar (Informed Consent Form-- Spanish)**

**Por favor lea este documento cuidadosamente, luego firme y retorne una de las copias junto con sus materiales en el sobre proveído. Guarde la otra copia para sus archivos personales.**

### **La Investigadora**

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT, candidata de doctorado en el programa de Terapia Marital y Familiar del Departamento de Psicología Profesional y Terapia Familiar de la Universidad Seton Hall, conduce este proyecto de investigación como parte de su disertación. El proyecto es supervisado por la doctora Sharon D. Massey, Ph.D., profesora en la Universidad Seton Hall.

### **Propósito del Estudio**

Este proyecto es un estudio acerca de las relaciones matrimoniales en tres tipos de parejas: 1) parejas en las que ambos esposos son de origen Latino (Latino-Latino), 2) parejas en las que uno de los esposos es Latino y el otro es Blanco (Estadounidense sin descendencia Latina) (Latino-Blanco), 3) parejas en las que ambos esposos son Blancos (Estadounidenses sin descendencia Latina). El estudio ayudara a identificar ciertos factores importantes en las relaciones matrimoniales de estos tres grupos de parejas, tales como el nivel de satisfacción matrimonial, las estrategias de comunicación y de remediación de conflictos, y temas que posiblemente causen conflictos en las parejas. Le invito a participar en este estudio. No obstante, antes de que proceda a completar los materiales, por favor tome unos minutos para leer este documento detenidamente. El mismo contiene información crucial la cual usted necesitara para dar su consentimiento para participar. Además, por favor lea con cuidado la lista de criterios para determinar si es elegible para participar en el estudio. Se espera que la participación de cada persona tome entre cuarenta y cinco minutos y una hora.

### **Explicación de los Procedimientos**

Al participar en el estudio, usted y su pareja recibirán un sobre con dos paquetes de materiales investigativos, uno para usted y otro para su pareja. Los materiales incluyen un corto formulario demográfico y un cuestionario marital llamado ENRICH (Enriqueciendo y Nutriendo las Relaciones, la Comunicación, y la Felicidad). El formato del ENRICH consiste en seleccionar la respuesta mas apropiada (con opciones del 1= estoy muy en desacuerdo hasta el 5= estoy muy de acuerdo), donde el que contesta debe indicar su acuerdo o desacuerdo con una serie de opciones que describen varios aspectos de la relación matrimonial. El ENRICH incluye preguntas tales como: "Mi pareja sabe escucharme bien" y "Tenemos dificultad decidiendo como manejar nuestras finanzas." Los participantes Latinos deberán además llenar un cuestionario sobre la aculturación llamado BAS (Escala Bidimensional de Aculturación para Hispanos). La aculturación es el proceso mediante el cual una persona proveniente de una cultura gradualmente se adapta a otra cultura. Las preguntas se presentan en un formato de escoger la respuesta adecuada (del 1 al 4). Los siguientes son algunos ejemplos de preguntas: "Con que frecuencia habla usted inglés?" "Con que frecuencia habla usted español?" "Que tan bien lee usted en inglés?" y "Con que frecuencia ve usted programas de televisión en español?" Debido a que los cuestionarios que se usaran para este estudio fueron desarrollados y aprobados en inglés, se requiere que los participantes en este estudio sepan leer y entender el inglés escrito lo suficientemente bien para poder seleccionar las respuestas que mejor describen su relación marital. Cada paquete de cuestionarios tiene un código que consiste en una combinación de números y letras, y que esta marcado "husband" (esposo) o "wife" (esposa). Por favor llene el paquete que le corresponde fuera de la compañía de su pareja para así poder preservar la confidencialidad de las respuestas de cada uno. Debido a que cada pareja recibirá solo una libreta de preguntas ENRICH, se pide que usted y su pareja se turnen utilizándola. Por favor no escriba en la libreta de preguntas ya que será utilizada nuevamente. Recuerde también que los participantes Latinos deben completar el cuestionario de aculturación BAS. Luego de completar todos sus materiales, por favor coloque solamente sus respuestas en el sobre pequeño que viene en su paquete y el cual esta marcado "husband" (esposo) o "wife" (esposa). Todos los materiales debe llenarse por completo para que la información colectada sea considerada válida. Además, ambos esposos deben participar para tomar a cada pareja en cuenta, ya que la pareja es la unidad que se investiga. Una vez que

ambos paquetes estén llenos y sellados en los sobres, por favor envíelos juntos en el sobre grande de respuesta que incluye la dirección de retorno adecuada y los sellos postales requeridos. Por favor devuelva todos sus cuestionarios ya llenos, al igual que las libretas de preguntas ENRICH, su formulario de Consentimiento para Participar firmado, y, si desea, su solicitud para recibir un resumen de los resultados del estudio (después de que el mismo haya concluido) dentro de dos semanas.

### **Participación Voluntaria**

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Usted no está obligado(a) a participar y puede retirar su participación en cualquier momento sin ningún riesgo de penalidad o pérdida alguna. En el caso de los participantes que sean clientes en la clínica donde la investigadora trabaja como consejera es importante notar que la calidad del cuidado o servicios que reciban estas personas en dichas instalaciones no se verá afectada de ninguna forma por su participación en el estudio.

### **Anonimidad**

Cada participante recibirá un pequeño sobre en el cual podrá colocar sus respuestas. Por favor no coloque ninguna información que pueda identificarle sobre ninguno de los materiales, incluso el sobre de retorno. Cada paquete de cuestionarios tiene un código que consiste en una combinación de números y letras. Aunque los códigos pueden ser usados por la investigadora para identificar a cada participante, la lista de códigos se mantendrá separada de la lista conteniendo los nombres y otra información personal de los participantes, excepto en los casos que se describen a continuación.

Hay cinco razones para el uso de los códigos. Primero, los códigos se usarán para parear los materiales de cada miembro de una misma pareja. Segundo, los códigos permitirán a la investigadora agrupar los datos de acuerdo a los tres grupos de parejas que participarán en el estudio (Latino-Latino, Latino-Blanco, Blanco-Blanco). Tercero, los códigos harán posible que la investigadora pueda controlar el flujo de materiales que se envían y se reciben, lo cual evitará la pérdida excesiva de materiales y ayudará a que cada pareja reciba a tiempo sus materiales sobre el enriquecimiento matrimonial (los cuales se enviarán dos semanas después que los paquetes completos de cada pareja sean recibidos). Cuarto, los paquetes de las parejas que son clientes en la clínica donde la investigadora trabaja como consejera recibirán un código especial, el cual permitirá que un(a) colega o asistente de la investigadora maneje estos paquetes. Solo este(a) colega/ asistente tendrá acceso a la lista de nombres que corresponden a estos códigos especiales. La información colectada en esta forma permanecerá sellada y separada del resto hasta que los datos de las 120 a 150 parejas participantes sean colectados y toda terapia con estas parejas haya concluido. Quinto, como se espera que algunas de las parejas soliciten un resumen de los resultados del estudio, los códigos permitirán parear las solicitudes con las direcciones de las parejas solicitantes de forma que la información se envíe eficazmente. A partir de ese punto, la información personal (nombre, dirección, teléfono) de todos los participantes será destruida.

Los resultados del ENRICH serán calculados por los autores del mismo usando computadoras. No obstante, ya que los cuestionarios no contendrán ninguna información que pueda identificar a los participantes, la identidad de estos no les será conocida en ningún momento a las personas calculando los resultados. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud acerca del estudio puede llamar anónimamente a la investigadora al (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Si prefiere, también tiene la opción de contactar a la supervisora del proyecto, la doctora Sharon Massey, al (xxx) xxx-xxxx o a la dirección [xxxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@shu.edu).

### **Confidencialidad**

Toda la información concerniente a los participantes será archivada bajo llave para prevenir cualquier acceso no autorizado. La información personal (nombre, dirección, teléfono) de los participantes será destruida tan pronto como todos los datos para el estudio hayan sido colectados. La información de aquellos participantes que soliciten un resumen de los resultados será destruida luego de que todos los resúmenes hayan sido enviados. Los datos del estudio (solamente las respuestas a los cuestionarios) serán retenidos por tres años para permitir futuros análisis y/o comparación con los resultados de otros estudios.

### **Límites de la Confidencialidad**

Acceso a la identidad y otra información personal de los participantes estará limitado a la investigadora, su asistente, y la supervisora del proyecto. Todos los miembros del equipo de investigación están obligados a mantener la confidencialidad de los participantes.

### **Acesoramiento de Riesgo**

Los cuestionarios utilizados en este estudio han sido empleados en otros estudios publicados sin ningún reporte de efectos adversos para las personas que los han llenado. Sin embargo, si luego de completar los cuestionarios usted tiene alguna inquietud con respecto a su matrimonio, o si desea enriquecer su matrimonio, usted tiene la opción de discutir sus inquietudes y/o deseos con un profesional entrenado en consejería marital. Se recomienda que aquellas personas que se consideren físicamente vulnerables ya sea por embarazo, enfermedad o condición médica, y que sientan alguna molestia o incomodidad física al llenar los cuestionarios, consulten a su médico. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud acerca del estudio mismo, por favor contacte a la investigadora o a la supervisora del proyecto.

### **Beneficios del Estudio**

Se espera que los resultados de este estudio provean información acerca del funcionamiento de tres grupos de matrimonios (Latino-Latino, Latino-Blanco, Blanco-Blanco). Ya que los análisis se calcularán a nivel de grupo, el estudio no proveerán resultados individuales a ninguna persona o pareja. No obstante, el participar en este estudio le ofrece a usted y a su esposo(a) la oportunidad de reflexionar acerca de su propia relación matrimonial a medida que contestan las preguntas en el cuestionario marital y el de aculturación. Al participar usted también contribuye al incremento del conocimiento científico acerca de los matrimonios monoculturales (Latino-Latino) e interculturales (Latino-Blanco). Además, si desea, puede obtener su propia copia de los resultados una vez que el estudio se complete. Como gesto de apreciación por su participación, al completar y retornar sus materiales, usted y su pareja recibirán gratuitamente un paquete de información acerca del enriquecimiento matrimonial. Las parejas interculturales (Latino-Blanco) recibirán adicionalmente información concerniente específicamente a este tipo de matrimonio.

### **Consentimiento para Participar**

Para indicar que da su consentimiento para participar en este estudio, después de leer este documento completamente, por favor firme y retorne una de las copias junto con sus materiales ya completos en el sobre proveído. Guarde la otra copia para sus archivos personales. Usted tiene el derecho de retirar su participación en cualquier momento sin ninguna penalidad.

### **Criterio de Elegibilidad**

1. El siguiente es un estudio de parejas. Ambos esposos deben participar para considerar los datos válidos.
2. Todos los participantes deben ser parejas legalmente casadas y heterosexuales que hayan convivido juntos por lo menos dos años.
3. Todas las parejas deben tener por lo menos un hijo juntos.
4. Cada participante debe ser:
  - a. Latino(a) y cuyo esposo(a) es Latino(a) o Blanco(a) (no-Latino)    O
  - b. Blanco(a) (no-Latino) y cuyo esposo(a) es Blanco(a) o Latino(a)

"Latino(a)" se refiere a una persona nacida en un país Latinoamericano de habla Española (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, República Dominicana, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, o Venezuela). Latino(a) también se refiere a una persona nacida en los Estados Unidos cuyos padres fueron ambos nacidos en un país Latinoamericano y, si viven en los Estados Unidos, inmigraron después de los 18 años. Personas de España y Portugal no están incluidas en esta categoría. "Blanco(a)" se refiere a una persona Caucásica que no es de origen Latino, quien nació en los Estados Unidos, y cuyos padres también nacieron en los Estados Unidos o inmigraron a dicho país antes de los 18 años, y quienes se originaron en el Norte u Occidente (Oeste) de Europa (Alemania, Austria, Bélgica, Dinamarca, Escocia, Finlandia, Francia, Gales, Holanda, Inglaterra, Irlanda, Italia, Luxemburgo, Noruega, Suecia, o Suiza). Las personas de España o Portugal no están incluidas en esta categoría.
5. Los participantes Latinos deben leer y entender inglés escrito.



### Información de Contacto

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud acerca de este estudio o acerca de sus derechos como participante, puede contactar a la investigadora anónimamente a la siguiente dirección, e-mail y teléfono:

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT  
Forest Institute Clinic  
1322 S. Campbell  
Springfield, MO 65807  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx, extensión xxxx  
[xxxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@shu.edu)

Si lo prefiere, puede contactar a la supervisora del proyecto:

Sharon Massey, Ph.D.  
Seton Hall University  
Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy  
400 S. Orange Avenue  
S. Orange, NJ 07079  
(xxx) xxx-xxxx  
[xxxxxxx@shu.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@shu.edu)

### Aprobación del Proyecto

Este proyecto ha sido evaluado y aprobado por el Comité Institucional de Evaluación para la Investigación con Sujetos Humanos de la Universidad Seton Hall (Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research). El IRB cree que los procedimientos empleados en este proyecto de investigación preservan adecuadamente la privacidad, el bienestar, las libertades civiles y derechos de los sujetos participantes. La directora del IRB puede ser localizada al (973) 275-2974.

Gracias por su interés y participación en este estudio.

Raquel D. Muller, M.A., M.S./MFT  
Candidata de Doctorado, Universidad Seton Hall

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_, he leído la información anterior y todas mis  
(nombre del esposo)  
preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción. Indico con mi firma que doy mi consentimiento para participar en esta actividad, teniendo presente que puedo retirar mi participación sin penalidad en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(firma del esposo)

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_, he leído la información anterior, y todas mis  
(nombre de la esposa)  
preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción. Indico con mi firma que doy mi consentimiento para participar en esta actividad, teniendo presente que puedo retirar mi participación sin penalidad en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(firma de la esposa)

Appendix H  
Demographic Questionnaire

Group Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic Questionnaire**

- 1) Your age \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Your sex \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Your highest level of education (check one)
  - 1) some grammar school \_\_\_\_\_ 2) completed grammar school \_\_\_\_\_ (finished grade 8)
  - 3) some high school \_\_\_\_\_ 4) high school graduate \_\_\_\_\_ (finished grade 12)
  - 5) some college \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Associate's (2yr.) degree \_\_\_\_\_ 7) college graduate \_\_\_\_\_
  - 8) Licenciatura \_\_\_\_\_ (if educated in Latin America) 9) some graduate school \_\_\_\_\_
  - 10) Master's Degree \_\_\_\_\_ 11) Doctorate/M.D./J.D. \_\_\_\_\_ 12) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Number of years of schooling you have completed (after elementary school) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Your occupation \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Your household yearly income (check one)
 

1) \$0- \$9,999 _____	2) \$10,000- \$19,000 _____	3) \$20,000- \$29,000 _____
4) \$30,000- \$39,000 _____	5) \$40,000- \$49,000 _____	6) \$50,000- \$59,999 _____
7) \$60,000- \$69,999 _____	8) \$70,000- \$79,999 _____	9) \$80,000- \$89,999 _____
10) \$90,000- \$99,999 _____	11) \$100,000 or more _____	
- 7) Your religious orientation \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Your ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Your country of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Years you lived there \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) If you immigrated to the United States, age at which did you arrived \_\_\_\_\_
 

Mother	Father
--------	--------

Country where your parents were born \_\_\_\_\_

If they migrated to the U.S., at what age did they do so? (note: if you don't remember the exact ages, give your best estimate)

Mother's age	Father's age
_____	_____
- 11) Number of years you have resided in the United States \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) Number of years you have been married to your present spouse \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) Number of children in your current marriage \_\_\_\_\_. Their ages \_\_\_\_\_.
- 14) Number of children from previous relationship(s), if applicable \_\_\_\_\_. Their ages \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix I

### Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS)

Group Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics(BAS)***(To be completed by Latino participants ONLY)*

	almost always	often	sometimes	almost never
<i>Language Use Subscale</i>				
1. How often do you speak English?	4	3	2	1
2. How often do you speak English with your friends?	4	3	2	1
3. How often do you think in English?	4	3	2	1
4. How often do you speak Spanish?	4	3	2	1
5. How often do you speak Spanish with your friends?	4	3	2	1
6. How often do you think in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
	very well	well	poorly	very poorly
<i>Linguistic Proficiency Subscale</i>				
7. How well do you speak English?	4	3	2	1
8. How well do you read in English?	4	3	2	1
9. How well do you understand television programs in English?	4	3	2	1
10. How well do you understand radio programs in English?	4	3	2	1
11. How well do you write in English?	4	3	2	1
12. How well do you understand music in English?	4	3	2	1
13. How well do you speak Spanish?	4	3	2	1
14. How well do you read in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
15. How well do you understand television programs in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
16. How well do you understand radio programs in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
17. How well do you write in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
18. How well do you understand music in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
	almost always	often	sometimes	almost never
<i>Electronic Media Subscale</i>				
19. How often do you watch television programs in English?	4	3	2	1
20. How often do you listen to radio programs in English?	4	3	2	1
21. How often do you listen to music in English?	4	3	2	1
22. How often do you watch television programs in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
23. How often do you listen to radio programs in Spanish?	4	3	2	1
24. How often do you listen to music in Spanish?	4	3	2	1

Appendix J

Thank You

## THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY!

As a gesture of appreciation for your participation, I will send you a free informational packet on how to strengthen marital relationships. You should receive this within a few weeks after you and your spouse return your completed research materials.

If you would also like to receive a copy of the final research results when the study is completed, simply check off that option on the slip at the bottom of this page and mail it in with your research materials. Please be advised that completion of the study may take up to nine months. If you request a summary of the research results, I will keep your personal records (i.e., address, phone, and e-mail address) so that I can send you this information once the study is finished. After all summaries have been sent, your information will be shredded. If you opt not to receive a summary of the final research results, your personal records will be shredded after all data for the study have been collected but before the study is completed.

Cut below the dotted line and mail the slip with your research materials in the return envelope

1) \_\_\_\_\_ I look forward to receiving the free information packet and do not wish to receive a summary of results.

2) \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive a summary of the final research results.  
(Please allow up to nine months for this). I would prefer to receive this  
information (check one)

via e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ OR regular (snail) mail \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Husband)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Wife)

## Appendix K

### Hand Out: Strengthening Marital Relationships



## Strengthening Marital Relationships

NOTE: Most of the material in this handout has been drawn from the book: "Fighting for your Marriage," by Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, and Sandra Blumberg (2001).

### General Guidelines

- Remember that having a happy marriage takes work. Marriage can be the most rewarding experience of your life, if you both nourish it. By now you've probably learned that marriage is not a fairy tale and that there is no magic formula to making it work. Mostly it is about what both partners put into it. It is also a commitment that must be renewed over and over, as each of you grows and as the relationship changes throughout your life together.
- Be realistic about your expectations of your marriage. Do not expect your spouse to meet every single one of your needs; this is impossible for any one person to do. Instead, try to find other ways to meet needs that your spouse cannot. For example, if you enjoy playing sports but your spouse does not, find another person with whom you can play your favorite sports.
- Do not be alarmed if you and your spouse are different in many ways. Although it is desirable to have at least some things in common with your partner, your marriage is not automatically doomed to fail if you are not exactly alike, or even if you're opposites. The truth is that ALL couples face challenges and difficulties. The most important factor in marital success is not how different or alike you are, but rather how well you handle differences and difficulties. If you start with mutual respect and acceptance, you are already in great shape. The rest is simply about learning skills to help you face the challenges of married life.
- Do not try to turn your partner into a different person. Many people get married expecting to change their partner in some way. It is important that you and your partner love and accept each other for who you each are. This does not mean that you cannot work on improving or strengthening your relationship. However, improvements most often occur when both partners are willing to do their part. If you want something to change in the relationship you must first focus on things that can be changed. Then make small, explicit and immediate requests; do not ask for monumental changes because this can scare your partner. When making a request use words like: "It would mean a lot to me if you would...." not "Why can't you...?"
- Believe that change can happen. Couples who have faith that they can create changes in their relationship do much better at it than those who believe that things will never change and hopelessly throw their hands up.
- Acknowledge your role in relationship problems. Blaming it all on your partner is not likely to be productive and can lead to resentment, anger and pain. In order to get more out of your marriage you must also give more. Do your part to work it out.
- Be friends with your partner. This means take an interest in his/her personal life, including daily activities, interests, aspirations and dreams.
- Commitment ("together no matter what") is crucial to marital success. There is security in knowing that you will not lose your relationship in the process of working out your differences with one another. Happy marriages stay together because of dedication and satisfaction rather than out of constraints (for example, the children).

- **Communication Guidelines**

Do not attempt to read the mind of your partner. This means saying things like: "I just know she's going to be too tired to go to the movies tonight," or "I'm sure that he didn't take the garbage out because he wanted to annoy me," or "If I tell him how I feel he'll think I'm silly." Mind-reading blocks you from actually understanding your partner and it may lead to mistaken perceptions and self-fulfilling prophecies that may contribute to or worsen marital conflict. Ask your partner what s/he thinks, feels, wants and needs, then be open and listen to what your partner has to say.

- If you tend to interpret some of your partner's behavior in a negative way (examples: "He invited his friends over to spite me because he knows I don't like them." "She's always too busy for me; she must not care about me anymore") ask yourself if your interpretations of your partner's behavior may be overly negative. Try to find evidence contradictory of your negative assumptions; pay attention to pleasant things your partner does. Give him/her the benefit of the doubt; this is more likely to lead to a healthy marriage than the opposite.
- Beware of "filters" in communication. Examples of filters are distractions, emotional states, beliefs and expectations, differences in style, and self-protection. These filters can affect how we perceive a message. For example, if you have had a bad day and are in a bad mood, you may be likely to interpret your partner's comment that the pasta was slightly undercooked more negatively than if you were in a good mood. Another example of filters in communication might be seen if one partner is highly expressive and raises his/her voice when speaking and the other partner interprets this as his/her spouse being upset, when, in fact, that may not be the case.

- **Conflict Resolution Guidelines**

Research shows that poor conflict-resolution is the single best predictor of marital failure. This means that, if only couples would learn to manage conflict effectively, they could have a much better relationship. Here are some guidelines to help you do this:

- Even while disagreeing, it is important for both of you to respect each other. This means no swearing, no name-calling, no criticizing, no putting down the other in any way. Destructive fighting corrodes love faster than any other factor and destroys the effect of positive interactions. This can be especially damaging if you consider the cumulative effect of many destructive interactions over time. The opposite of this pattern is validation, which means to be accepting of your partner's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and actions, and not putting his/her worth into question.
- During arguments, never threaten the future of your relationship (for example, saying: "I don't know why I stay with you," or "Maybe we should just end this"). Do not use intimate knowledge of your mate to hurt him/her (for example: "It's not my fault you're bitter because your mother never loved you"). Both of these patterns are highly detrimental to marital relationships. Remember that often the negative things you say during an argument cannot be taken back. Even if you did not mean what you said, your statements may be hurtful to your partner long after the fight has ended.
- While engaged in conflict-resolution, use calmness and active listening. This is likely to avoid nasty fights and will lead to more constructive problem-solving and satisfaction.
- Learn to regulate your negative emotions, both when you are upset and when your partner is upset. This is one of the most important things you and your spouse can do to manage marital conflict. Doing this will help you to reduce the probability of negative escalation. If you feel a conflict starting to get nasty or out of control you may want to pause and use the speaker-listener technique, which is described later in this hand-out.

- If you and/or your partner are far too upset to talk at the moment, stop, take a break if necessary, and return to the conversation when both of you are calmer. You and your partner may want to choose a way to signal to the other when one of you needs a break from the discussion, such as a key word or phrase.
- Do not try to avoid the problem or withdraw from the discussion. Avoiding means ignoring the problem altogether and withdrawing refers to actions like leaving the scene, pretending not to hear, and giving each other the silent treatment. Even if the problem is difficult to talk about, it is best to address it head-on. If you simply try to forget about it, it is almost certain to come up again and again. The key is learning to resolve conflict constructively.
- Beware of the pursuer-withdrawer pattern. This happens when one partner, often the woman, initiates a discussion about a topic of perceived importance to the couple, while the other partner, often the man, pulls away by refusing to discuss the issue or walking away from the situation. More often than not, this withdrawal does not represent a lack of interest or investment in the relationship, but rather anxiety about the topic of discussion and/or a fear that the discussion will lead to serious conflict and perhaps even a break-up. You and your partner must work hard to get out of or avoid this pattern. Work as a team, you are not in competition.
- When bringing up an issue for discussion or expressing a concern, do not use blanket overgeneralizations or attacks, such as "You're so inconsiderate!" Statements like these are likely to put your partner on the defensive and to lead to a fight. Instead, be as specific as possible and use "I" statements to express why this issue is a problem for you. For example, you may say: "I get frustrated when I come home after a hard day at work and you begin to complain about the kids before even saying hello to me." This statement does not attack or criticize your partner, but instead it tells him/ her exactly what s/he did wrong and how it made you feel. In this way, you take responsibility for your feelings rather than blaming your spouse, and your partner knows what s/he needs to do differently.
- Beware of "hidden" issues. These are issues that are not usually talked about openly and which trigger conflict. For example, if you and your spouse find yourselves fighting bitterly over who should do the grocery shopping this could signal the existence of a hidden power struggle between you and your mate. In this case the fight about doing the groceries may actually be about feeling like your mate is bossing you around. Other hidden issues include recognition, caring, commitment, integrity, and acceptance. You should suspect hidden issues when:
  - You have the same argument repeatedly and you don't feel your attempts to solve it get anywhere. That may be because in your discussions you have not addressed the "real" issue.
  - Trivial issues are blown out of proportion (such as the grocery shopping in the example above).
  - One or both of you avoid discussions of certain topics (such as cultural or religious differences).
  - One or both of you start keeping score of things the other does that annoy or hurt the other

#### **Steps to Problem-solving**

1. Problem discussion: you and your spouse first need to identify and discuss the problem. One way that this can be done is by using the speaker-listener technique (described on a separate page of this hand-out). You may even find that there is no problem to be solved and that you may be satisfied by simply airing your thoughts, feelings, and/or concerns.

## 2. Problem solution:

- A. *Agenda setting*: Because often problems or issues are made up of smaller problems, you and your partner must decide what specific piece of the problem you will solve. For example, instead of having a general discussion about how to deal with in-laws, you may want to focus specifically on how to have a peaceful and pleasant Thanksgiving Holiday with your spouse's parents, who are coming to visit for the occasion.
- B. *Brainstorming*: Both partners think of as many ideas as they can without evaluating them. These ideas should be written down. Both partners should be as creative as they can. Any idea is acceptable at this stage in the process.
- C. *Agreement and compromise*: Together, partners decide on a specific solution based on the ideas they generated. It is very important that both partners agree on and commit to trying a specific course of action, otherwise the process will not work. Likewise, it is crucial to come up with as specific a plan as possible. A note of caution: do not make an agreement too quickly simply to get out of the discussion. Otherwise, your solution may not work.
- D. *Follow-up*: This is an often neglected but important part of problem-solving. Follow-up is important to see how the solution to a problem is working out. At times, it may be necessary to make adjustments to the solution to make it workable in the long run.

- Because resolving conflict and problems is not necessarily fun even though it is necessary, you might try balancing out talks about difficult topics with pleasant, friendly talks.
- It is also helpful to take a hard look at your own perceptions and behavior. In other words, analyze what makes you act the way you do and what you're thinking during moments of conflict. For example, are you really listening to what your spouse has to say, or are you simply quietly waiting your turn while thinking about how you are going to respond?
- Establish a set of rules that will govern your conflict-management. For example, decide in advance when would be the best time to address a particular issue; this way you will both be prepared and less anxious during the discussion. Be wise in choosing times for problem-solving discussions. Do not attempt to discuss sensitive or conflictive issues when your partner is under high-stress or simply not ready for it, such as at bedtime, dinner time, or immediately after coming home from work. Check with him/her about an appropriate time to discuss the matter so that your discussion can be calm and productive. You may use tools such as the speaker-listener technique (outlined later in this document) for these discussions, and you may even wish to make a standing weekly appointment for this purpose.
- Sometimes there may be problems that you are unable to solve, even after conscientiously going through the above steps several times. In cases like these, consider the possibility that you and your partner may simply have to learn to live with your differences, or "agree to disagree." An example of this might be when one partner is religious and the other is not. Keep in mind that each partner is entitled to his or her beliefs, and it is often more important that both partners be respectful of one another's beliefs than it is that they agree.

## Promoting Intimacy

- Both men and women desire intimacy, but they do not always seek it in the same ways. For example, women tend to prefer verbal intimacy, whereas men tend to seek intimacy through shared activities. There are four kinds of intimacy: a) conversational intimacy (revealing inner world of feelings, thoughts, wishes); b) emotional intimacy (expressing feelings such as anger and fear in an open and spontaneous manner, as well as accepting the partner's feelings); c) physical intimacy (example, kissing, holding, caressing); d) sexual intimacy (loving/respectful sexual activity is comfortable and enjoyable).

- Friendship between spouses is the main ingredient for maintaining intimacy. Friendship is nourished when people are able to share their deepest thoughts and feelings, their hopes, dreams and disappointments with one another without reservation. Friends share common interests and do fun things together. In order to remain friends, you and your spouse must balance the fun stuff with the conflicts and disagreements, otherwise your friendship may die away and you may be left with nothing to share but problems.

Here are some strategies for preserving friendship in your marriage

1. Make time for each other. This may be a challenge, but it is necessary for the sake of your relationship. Think of it as an investment. Most of us can find time to do something if we truly consider it important. Making time may be easier if, for example, you designate one evening of the week as "couple night" and you make this a permanent part of your weekly schedule.
2. Friendship and conflict should not mix. If you are spending time together as friends keep conflict and issues from creeping into your "friend time" by agreeing to discuss them at another time.
3. Talk as friends. This means to take an interest in what your spouse does and is interested in. It also means that each partner listens to the other as a friend would, without passing judgment and without attempting to change him/her.
4. Have fun together. Laugh together a lot, and don't be afraid to get silly once in a while. Go on dates often, like you probably used to do in the beginning of your courtship. You and your partner may wish to brainstorm to find ideas for fun activities you can do together. Keep in mind that having fun doesn't have to be elaborate or costly. You could, for example, go bike riding together, cook together, have a romantic dinner at home, go for a Sunday drive, or give each other a massage.

### **Protecting Your Sex Life**

- Of course, having a satisfying sex life is a big part of promoting couple intimacy. It is important to note that a couple's sex life should not only consist of foreplay and intercourse. If you recall your and your partner's courtship, you'll likely remember things like kissing, caressing, hugging, holding hands, cuddling, dressing up to impress one another, buying flowers, wearing perfume/ cologne, whispering romantic words in the other's ear, etc. All of these are part of what Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2001) refer to as "sensual" acts and are not necessarily associated with sex. Rather, they are associated with all of the senses. They build physical intimacy and help partners stay connected with each other.
- Sensual talking is an aspect of maintaining your sensual relationship. Often couples stop using this kind of talk soon after marriage, not realizing how important it is. This involves telling your spouse things like how attractive s/he is, how wonderfully s/he smells, and how much you love him/her.
- Other expressions of sensuality are sending flowers, wearing perfume, sending romantic e-mails, and whispering romantic words in the loved one's ear. You might be surprised to find what a difference these little things can make. Nurturing sensuality can be an especially effective way of re-capturing interest in sex, if it has been lost (assuming that there are no physical causes for lack of interest in sex).
- In order to have good physical and sexual intimacy, you and your spouse must agree to leave conflicts and issues out when you are being sensual or sexual with each other. Otherwise, a perfectly romantic moment may get spoiled and may even lead you to avoid intimate moments in the future for fear that a fight will erupt.

- During sex, focus on enjoyment rather than on performance. If one or both of you are focused on how you are "performing" during sex, or whether you or your partner will have an orgasm, this is likely to lead to high anxiety, which often leads to less enjoyment, and even sexual problems (for example, premature ejaculation and difficulty with erections for men, and difficulty lubricating or reaching orgasm for women). The key is to enjoy each other and leave the pressures outside the door. This includes time pressures. Do not rush when you are being intimate; again, this is an investment in your relationship.
- Just as you communicate about other aspects of your relationship, you must communicate about your sex life. Tell your partner what you enjoy sexually and ask what s/he likes. NEVER expect your partner to simply know what you like or want. S/he is almost certainly not a mind reader, which makes this an unfair and unrealistic expectation, even if you have been married for many years. Also, be sensitive to your partner's wishes, desires, and needs when s/he expresses these to you.
- Get out of the routine! Use creativity to spice up your sex life. Try making love in different rooms of the house, wearing a sexy outfit, massaging each other with scented oils, lighting candles, or taking a bubble bath together, for example. The passion that you felt in the beginning of the marriage need not leave the relationship- ever! It's up to you to keep it alive.

### **Speaker-Listener Technique**

The speaker-listener technique can be used whenever you and your partner are talking about sensitive issues (for example, your sex life) or highly conflictual issues in your relationship (such as money or in-laws). This technique helps to create a structured and safe environment in which both of you can express your thoughts, feelings and opinions. By introducing paraphrasing the interaction takes place more slowly, which gives you both time to think about what you're doing and saying and allows you to avoid the negative escalation that can be so destructive to your marriage. You may feel awkward at first, but you might find that the process becomes much easier and comfortable as you practice it. You may want to start out by having a few practice sessions discussing non-relationship issues until you get the gist of it. Remember, the idea is to promote a safe environment in which communication can occur, which helps to promote sharing and intimacy. Please read the following rules carefully before you begin.

#### **Rules for the Speaker**

1. Speak for yourself, avoid mind-reading! Use "I" statements to express *your* thoughts, feelings, and concerns (example: "I was hurt when you didn't answer my question because I thought you were ignoring me on purpose" NOT: "I know you were ignoring me on purpose").
2. Keep your statements brief. Doing this allows the listener to better process the information you are trying to convey and helps the conversation flow more smoothly.
3. Stop and let the listener paraphrase your statements. After you have briefly stated your point, allow the listener to paraphrase what you said. If the paraphrase is inaccurate, calmly and respectfully repeat your statement. Repeat the procedure until you are satisfied that the listener has gotten the message. The idea is to help your partner understand what you are trying to communicate to him/her.

#### **Rules for the Listener**

1. Paraphrase what you hear. Use your own words to state what the speaker just said. If you do not understand something s/he said, ask for clarification. Make sure you understand what was said.
2. Focus on the speaker's message. Do not evaluate or react to the message until it's your turn as the speaker. This is difficult, but it is crucial to productive communication. You'll get your chance to say your piece when you get the floor to speak.

### Rules for Both

1. The speaker has the floor. Choose an object you can use to symbolize the floor (for example, the remote control, a pen, a magazine, a CD). The person who is holding the object *always* has the floor. The other person is the listener.
2. The speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases.
3. Share the floor. The speaker has the floor first. After s/he expresses his/her thoughts or feelings and the listener accurately paraphrases the message, the speaker the speaker and listener switch roles and repeat the procedure, with both having several turns in each role.

### Books you may find helpful

- Gottman, John (1995). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: And How to Make Yours Last*. Simon & Schuster Publishers.
- Lerner, Harriet (2001). *The Dance of Connection: How to Talk to Someone when You're Mad, Hurt, Scared, Frustrated, Insulted, Betrayed, or Desperate*. Harper Collins Publisher.
- Markman, Howard; Stanley, Scott & Blumberg, Sandra (2001). *Fighting for Your Marriage*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Notarius, Clifford. & Markman, Howard (1994). *We Can Work It out: How to Solve Conflicts, Save Your Marriage, and Strengthen Your Love for Each Other*. Penguin Putnam Publishers.

## Supplement on Intercultural Marriages

### Some areas of conflict for intercultural couples (as discussed in the marital literature)

- financial management
- childrearing
- family and friends (acceptance by and relationship with)
- sexual relations
- division of labor/ gender roles
- different values, beliefs, and preferences
- time together
- verbal and non-verbal modes of communication
- incompatible personalities
- religious differences

You will notice that these areas of conflict are actually issues that most couples, whether intercultural or not, fight about. As you have already learned, having differences is not necessarily what decides the fate of a marriage. What is important is *how* the couple approach and handle those differences.

### Some factors promoting healthy adjustment in intercultural marriages

- **Ability of each partner to be himself/herself:** Partners in intercultural relationships may sometimes wish to change who they are to adopt the values, beliefs, or preferences of the other in an attempt to minimize cultural differences. This is especially likely to occur in the beginning of the relationship. However, as you probably already know, people tend to be happier when they feel loved and accepted for who they are.

- **Marrying for love:** There are many reasons why people may marry someone from a different race, ethnicity, or culture. For example, marital literature has suggested sexual curiosity, rebellion against parents, and attempts to gain higher social status (for minority partner) as some of the reasons for marrying interculturally. Although these may be valid reasons for marriage, it is believed that marrying for love can give a couple the motivation to face the difficult challenges that may come up in the marriage. Some other motives may not offer a strong foundation that can support the marriage in times of stress.
- **Sharing common values, beliefs and goals:** Having common values, beliefs and goals is likely to reduce the amount of conflict that arises in the relationship to begin with. However, do not be alarmed if you and your partner do not have a lot in common. First of all, if you are both respectful of each other's values, beliefs and goals you are already in a great place. Many of the practical issues you may face can be resolved by compromising. On other issues you may simply have to agree to disagree. Again, respect and validation are the key.
- **Awareness of cultural differences:** Many couples avoid discussing their cultural differences because they are afraid of conflict and/or the partner's rejection. However, if you do not acknowledge or if you minimize your cultural differences you are likely to experience conflict as a result of "hidden issues" (see page 3 of this handout), and the problems are likely to come up again and again. Do not try to simply "sweep issues under the rug." Instead, talk openly and honestly about your differences. Because this can be very difficult, the speaker-listener technique (see page 6 of this handout) would be very helpful to use.
- **Having realistic expectations of intercultural marriage:** As you probably already know, marriage in general requires dedication, commitment, and hard work. People in intercultural marriages would be wise to expect to deal with a certain amount of conflict related to cultural differences. This is often in addition to the typical challenges of marriage. This means that intercultural couples often must work a bit harder to keep their marriage healthy and happy.
- **Liking the spouse's culture:** Cultural differences are probably more easily negotiated when both partners have an appreciation for each other's cultures and approach cultural differences with curiosity and respect.
- **A lasting spirit of adventure:** Compromise in an intercultural relationship is also easier if both partners keep an open mind and are willing to try new experiences, including foods, places, people and behaviors (such as religious rituals).
- **A sense of humor:** Keeping your sense of humor in the face of difficult experiences is a wonderful way of fighting stress and maintaining a positive outlook. In addition, partners' ability to joke and laugh together is an essential part of building and nourishing the friendship between spouses that characterizes happy marriages.
- **Support from family, friends, and society:** Family and friend relationships can create much strain in a marriage when partners feel as though they have to compete with their spouse's family and/or friend over their loved one's affection and time. It may be particularly stressful if one or both partner's families do not accept the intercultural relationship. Unfortunately, this is still the case in many families, and often leads to fights and long-term separations between family members. Generally, intercultural couples, and specially their children, thrive in environments where they feel accepted and validated. It is also helpful to live in areas where there are other intercultural couples with whom you can share some of your experiences, especially if family support is lacking.



**Books you may find helpful**

- Breger, Rosemary & Hill, Rosanna (1998). *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*. Berg Publishers, Inc.
- Crohn, John (1998). *Mixed matches: How to Create Successful Interracial, Interethnic, and Interfaith Relationships*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Moran, Rachel (2001). *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race and Romance*. University of Chicago Press.
- Root, Maria (2001). *Love's Revolution: Racial Intermarriage*. Temple University Press.